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(54) **APPARATUS FOR RELEASABLY COUPLING TWO ELEMENTS**

(75) Inventors: **Robert Lance Cook**, Katy, TX (US);
David Paul Brisco, Duncan, OK (US);
Lev Ring, Houston, TX (US); **Michael Bullock**, The Woodlands, TX (US)

(73) Assignee: **Shell Oil Company**, Houston, TX (US)

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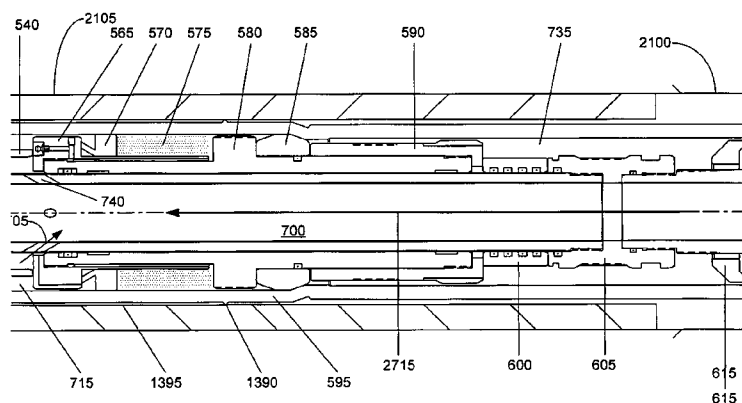
Primary Examiner—Zakiya Walker

(74) *Attorney, Agent, or Firm*—Haynes and Boone LLP; Todd Mattingly

(57) **ABSTRACT**

An apparatus for coupling two elements including an outer tubular member defining one or more outer tubular member slots, an inner tubular member defining one or more inner tubular member slots positioned within the outer tubular member, and a coupling assembly for releasably coupling the outer tubular member to the inner tubular member, including a tubular coupling body movably coupled to the inner tubular member, a coupling arm extending from the tubular coupling body, and a coupling element extending from the coupling arm, the coupling element adapted to mate with at least one outer tubular member slot and at least one inner tubular member slot.

33 Claims, 79 Drawing Sheets



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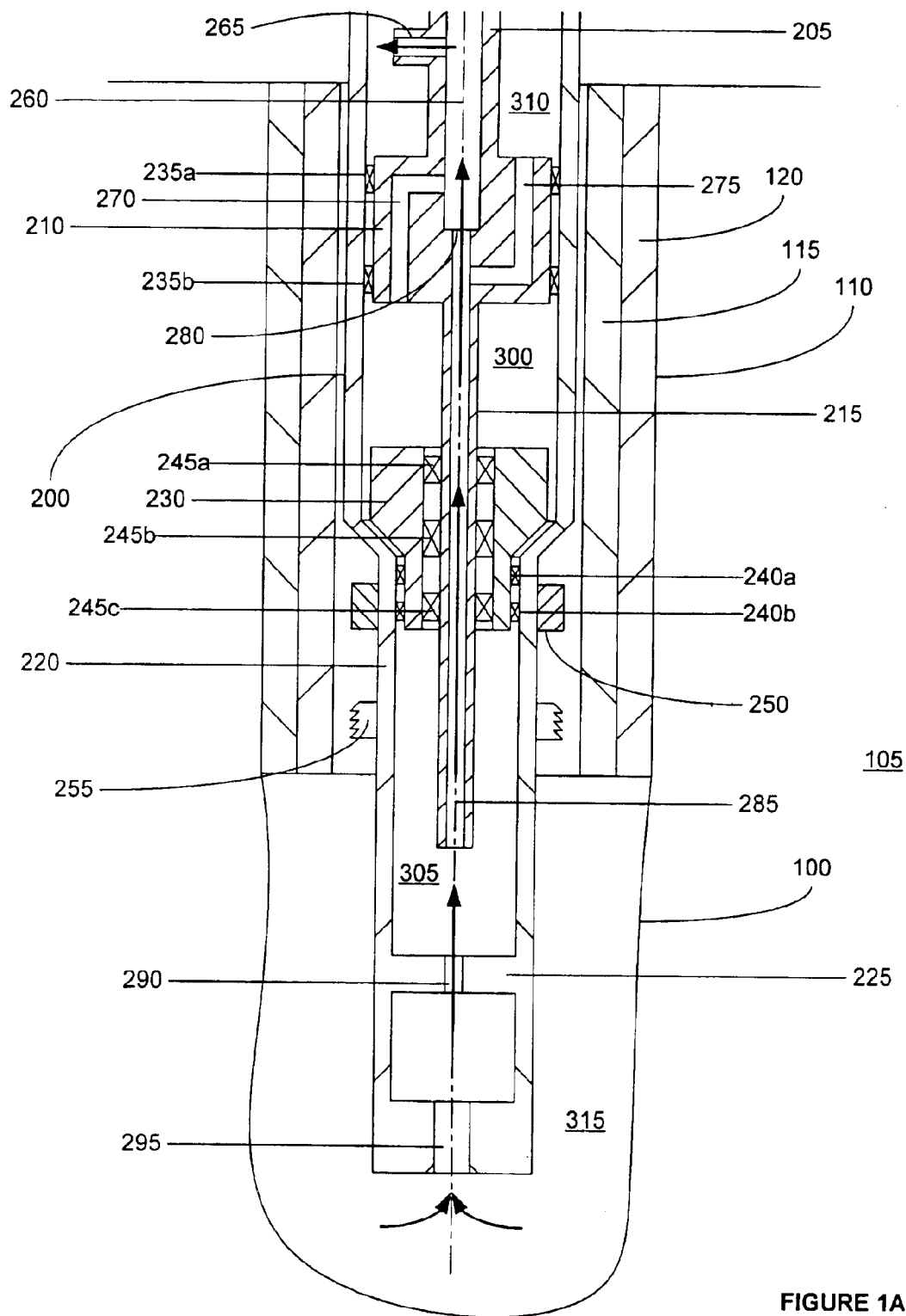
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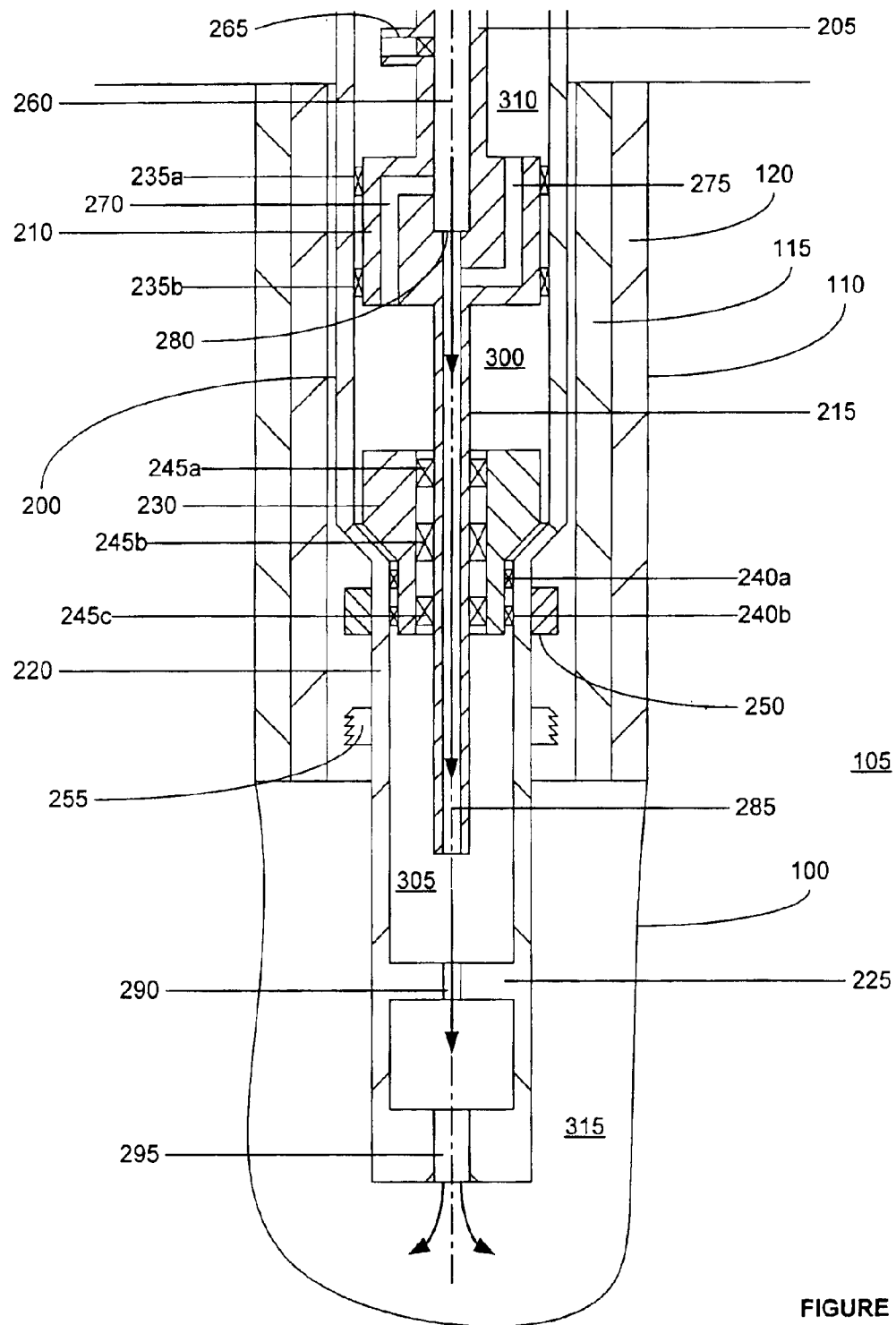
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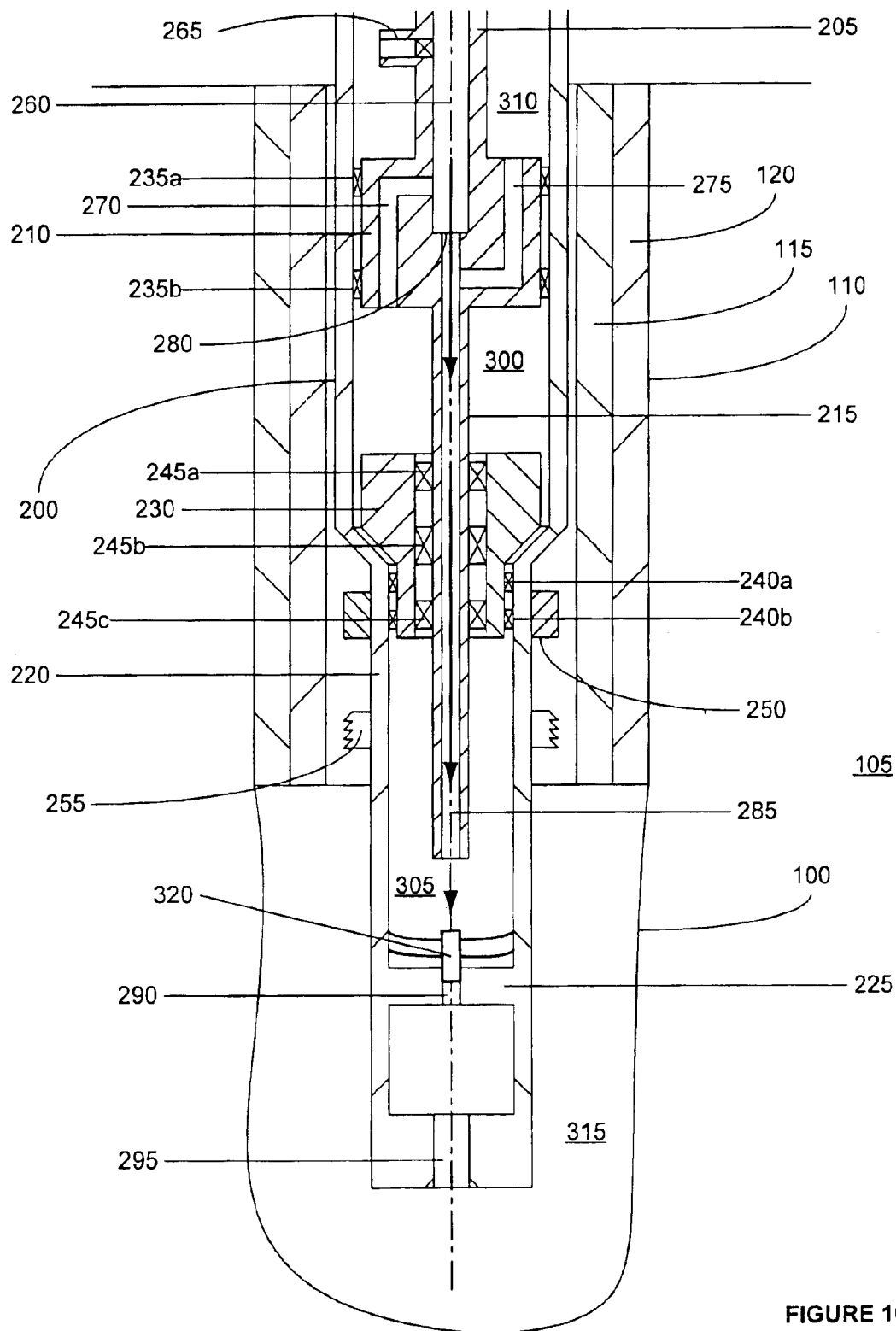
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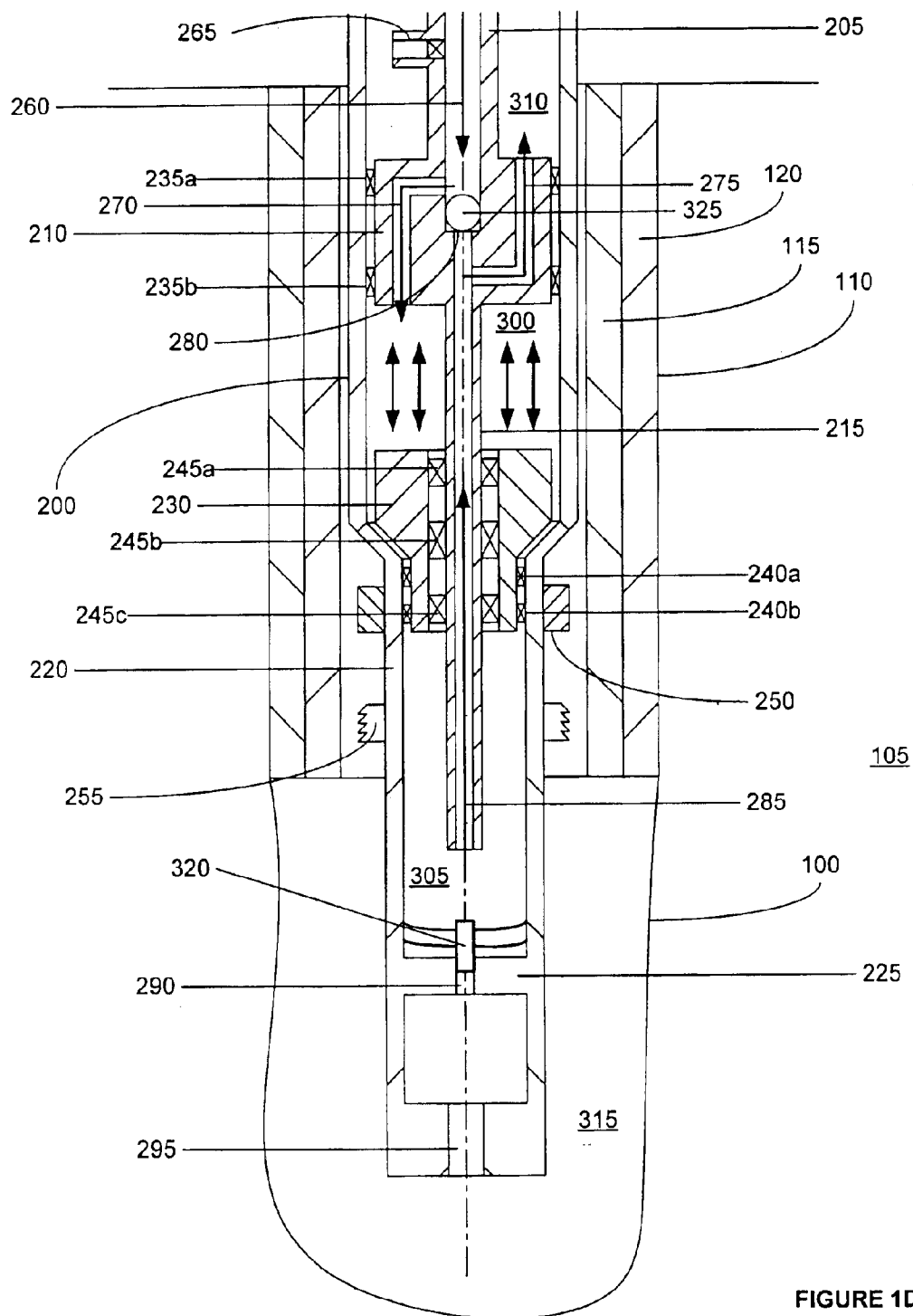
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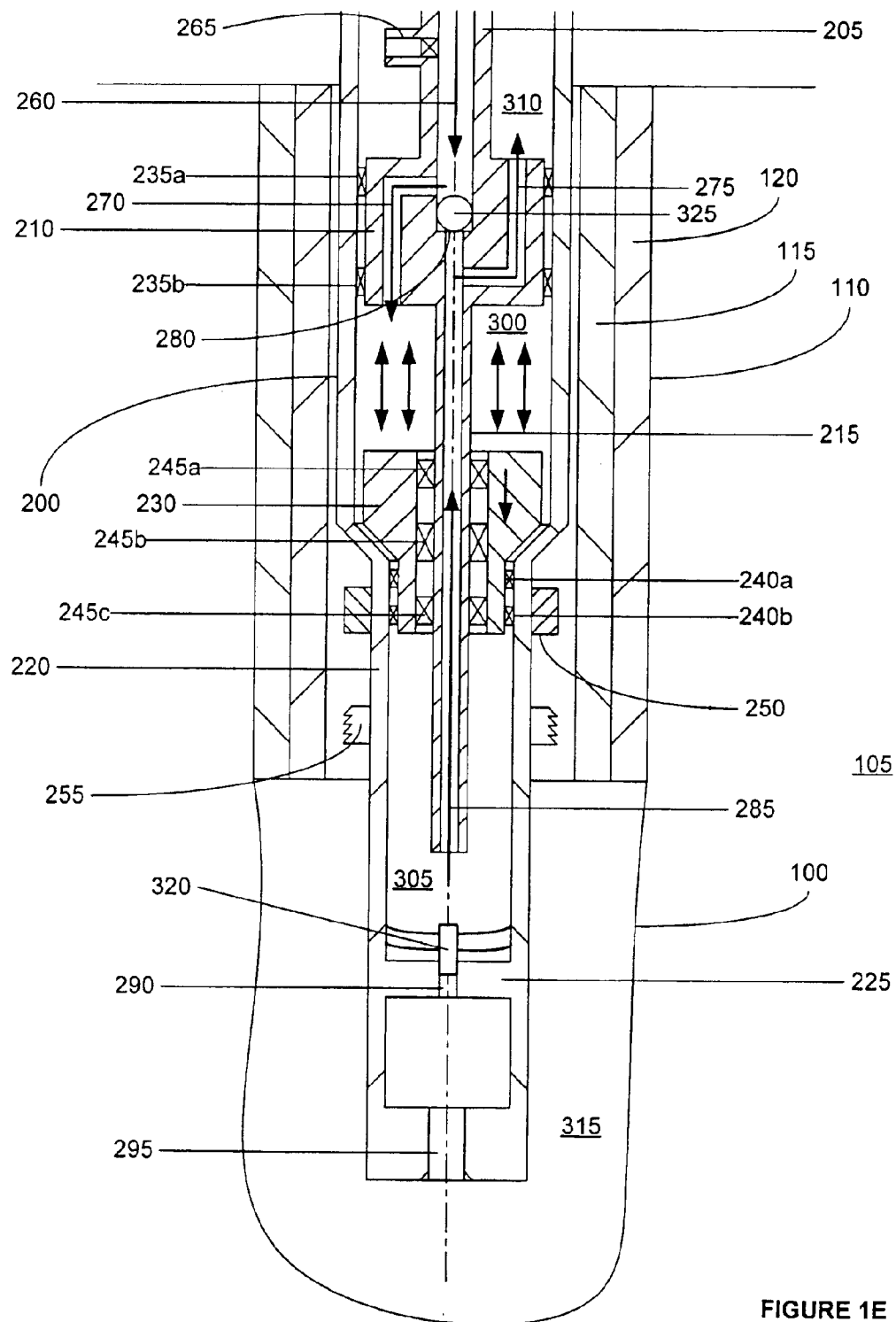
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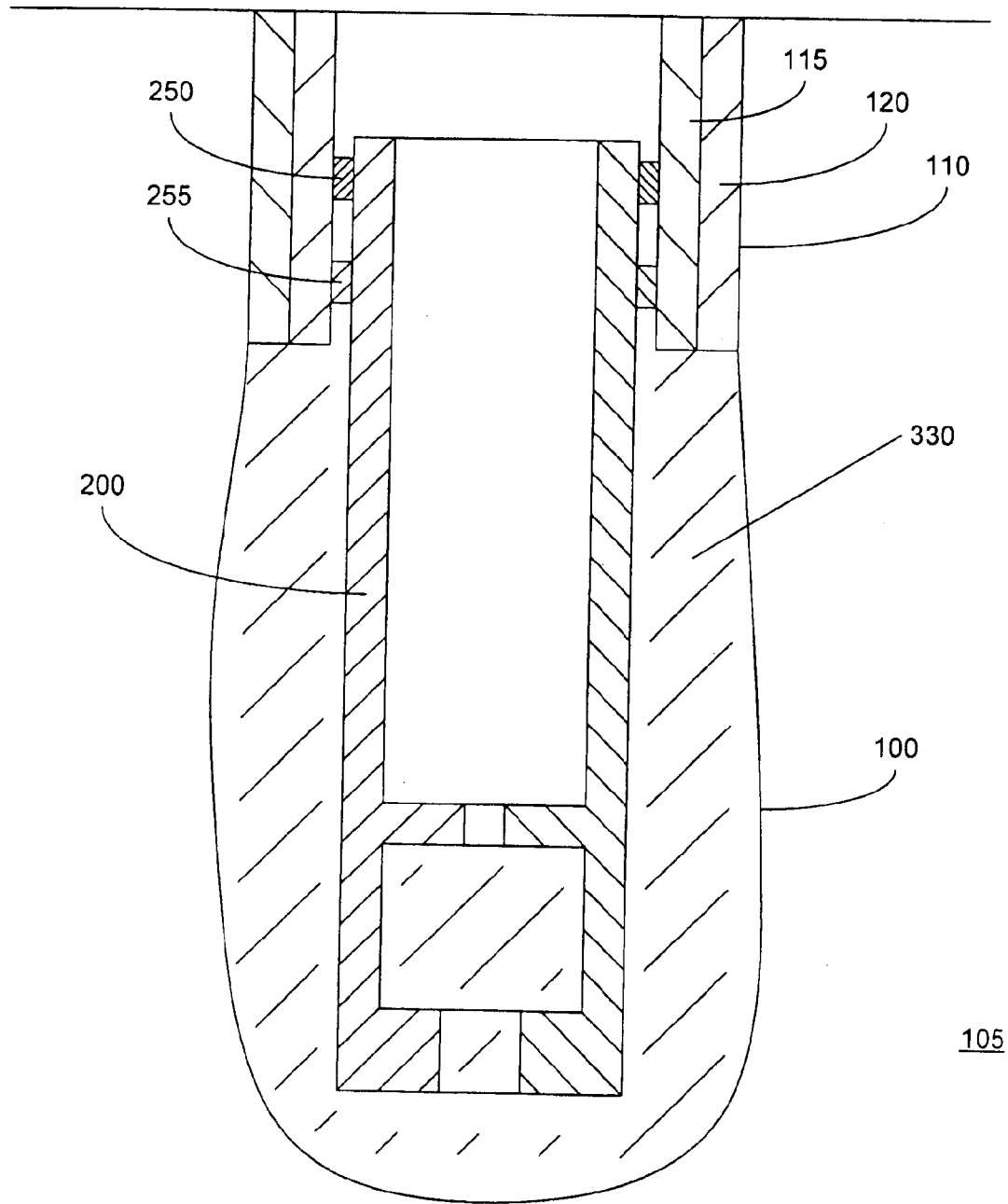


FIGURE 1F

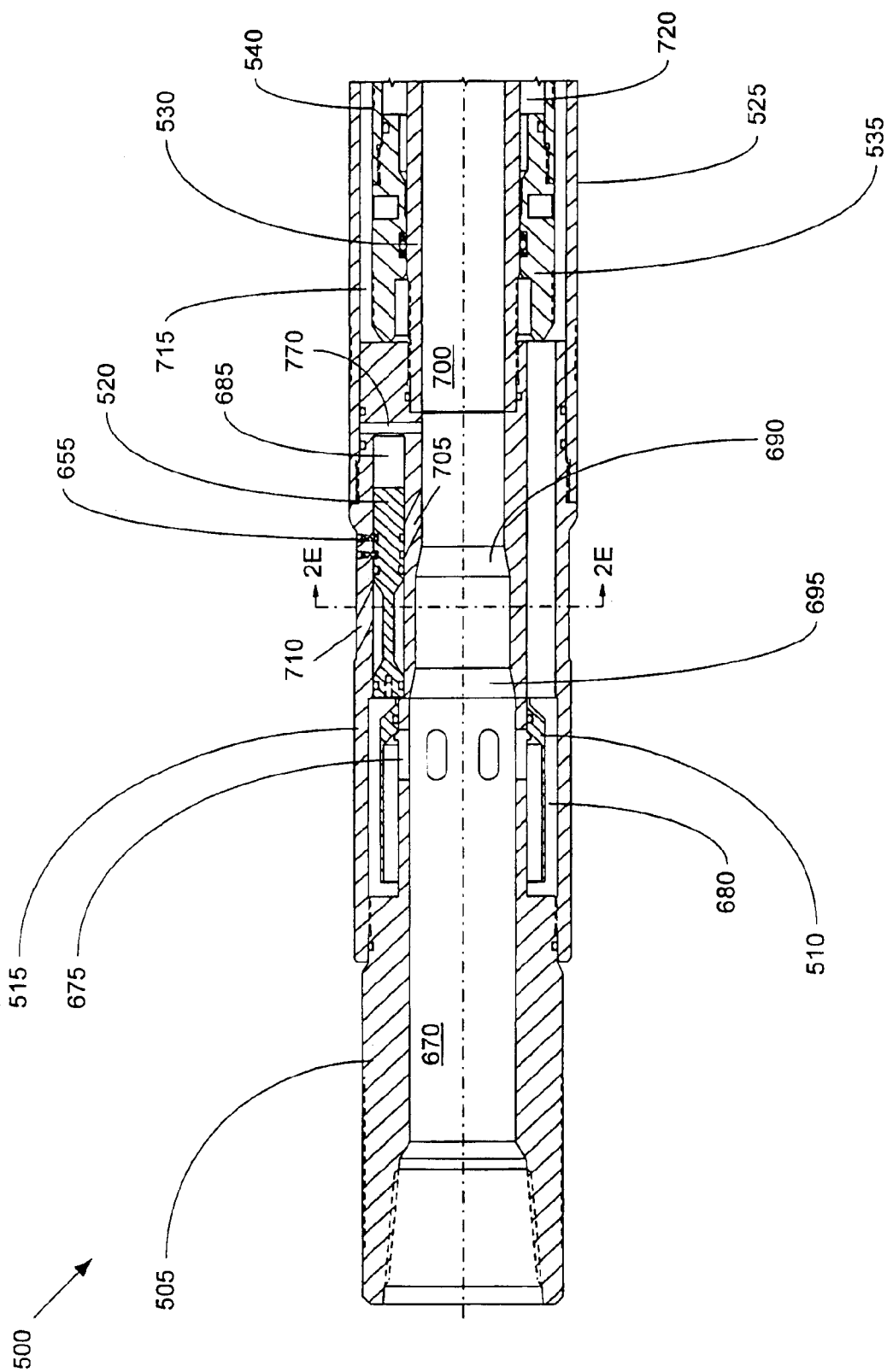


FIGURE 2A

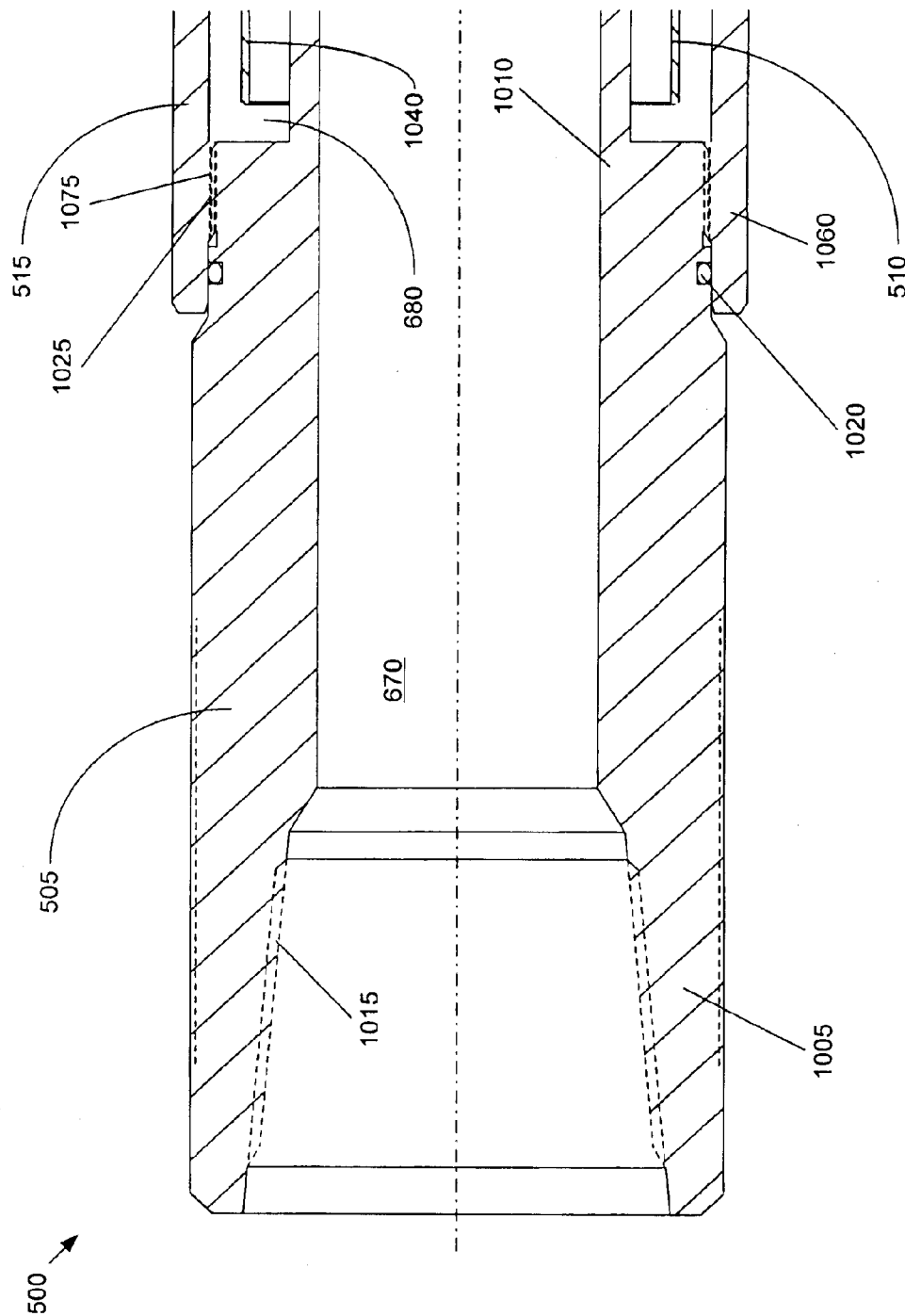


FIGURE 2B

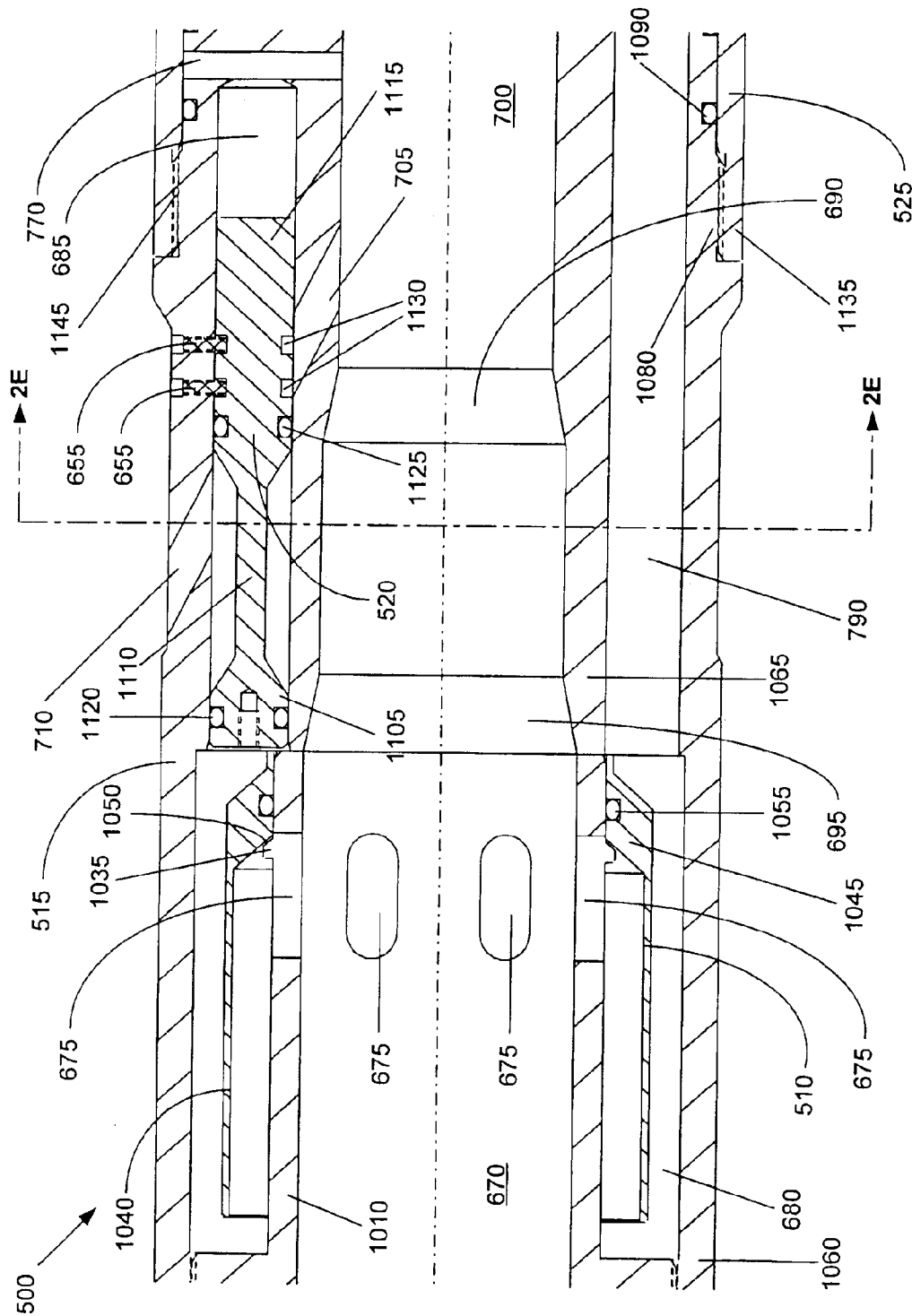


FIGURE 2C

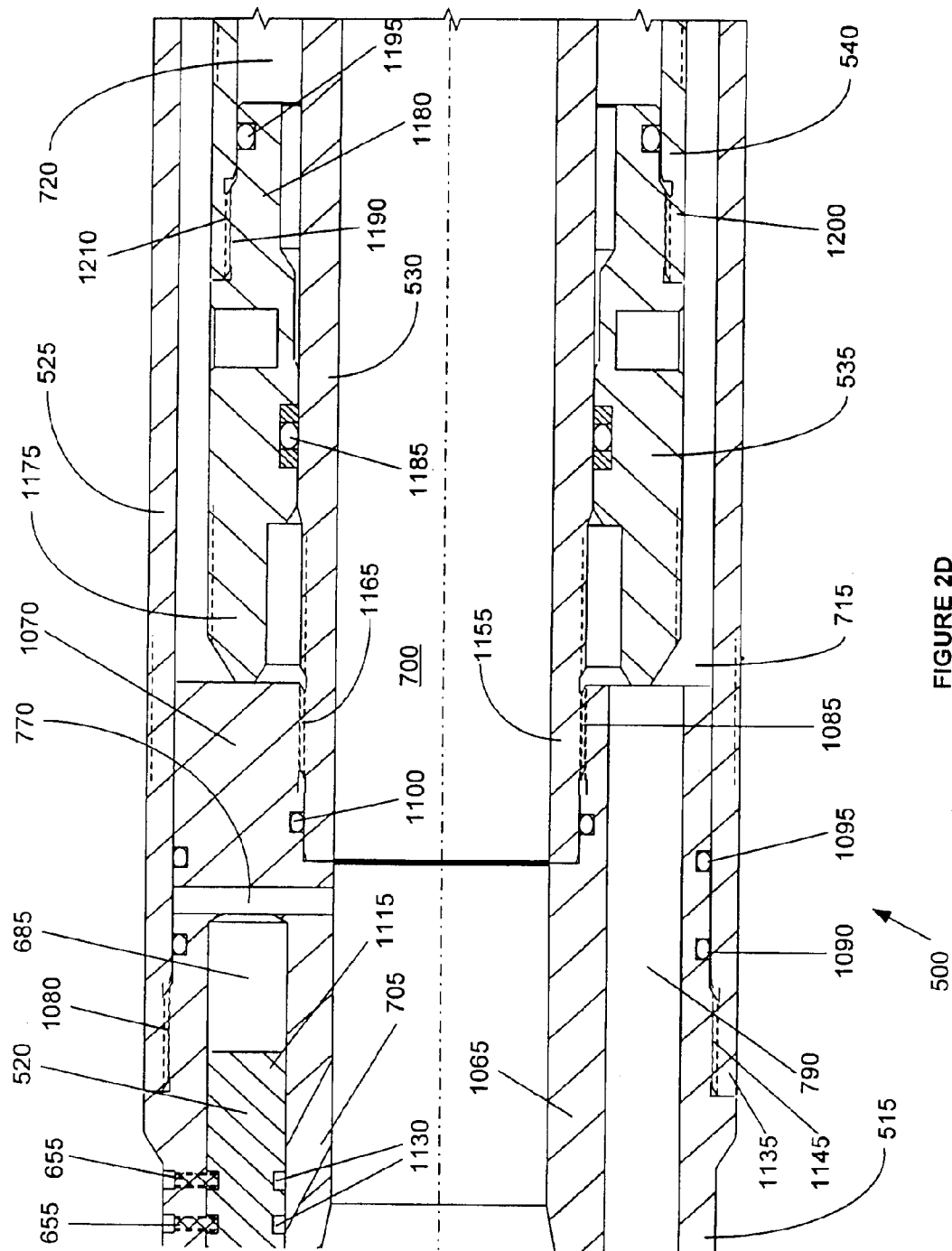


FIGURE 2D

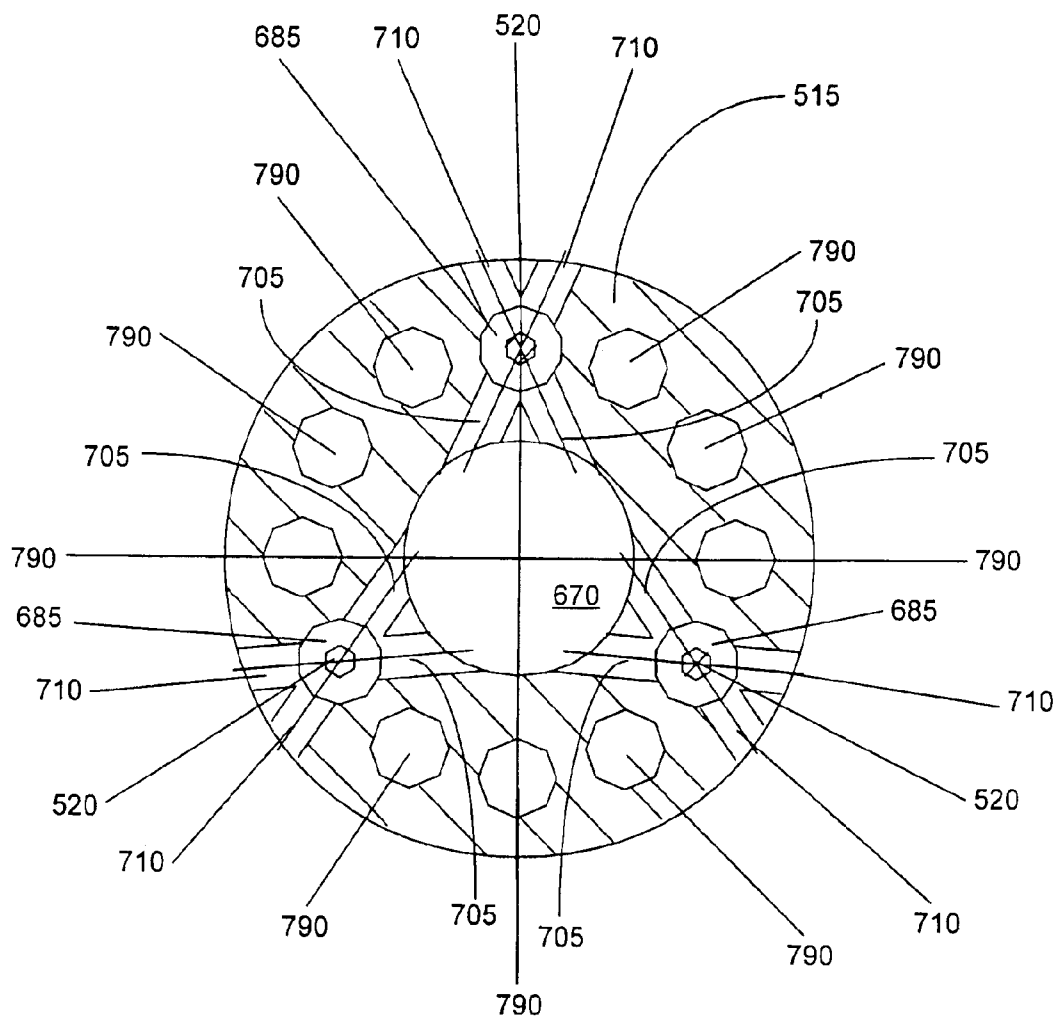


FIGURE 2E

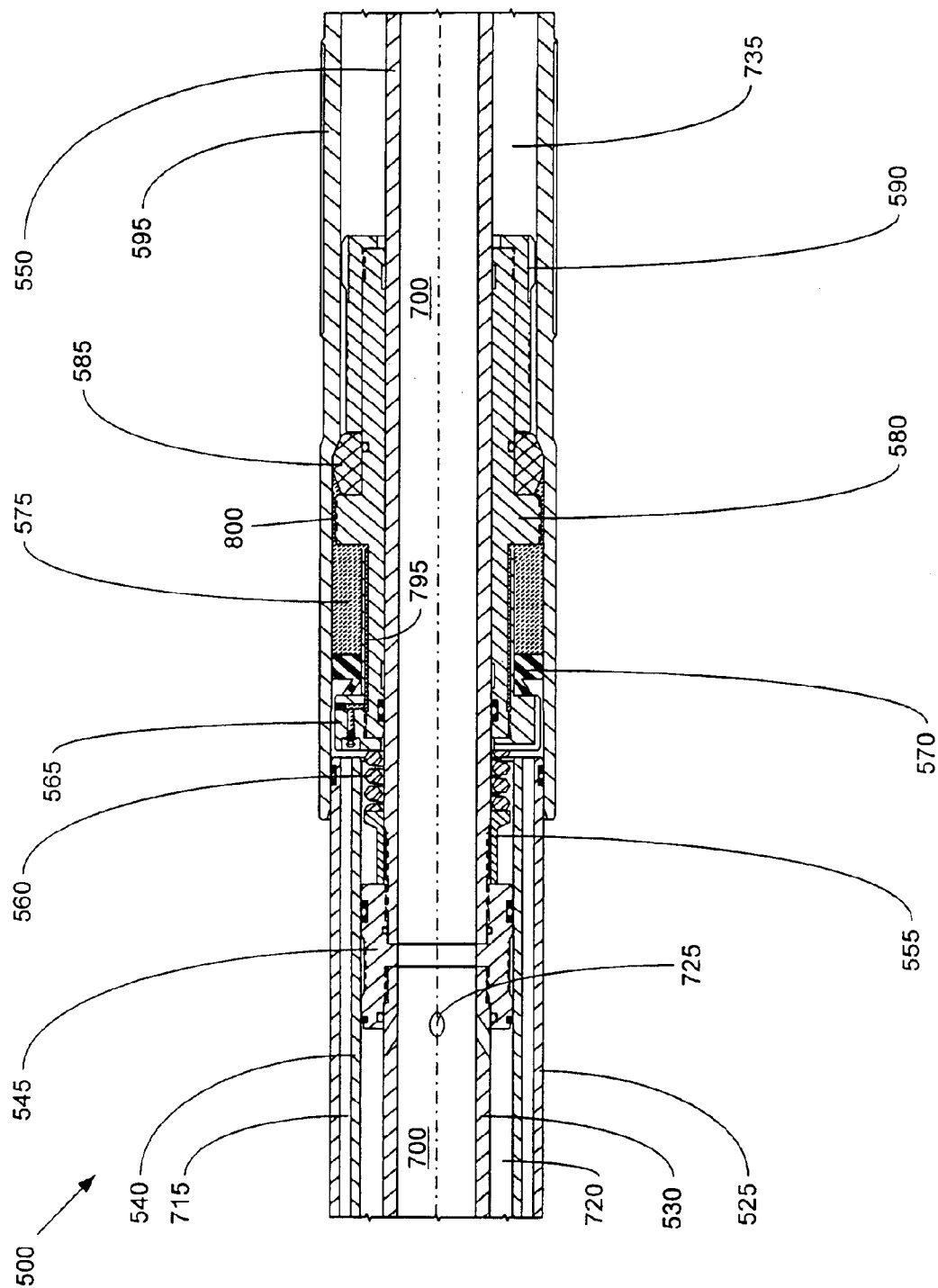


FIGURE 2F

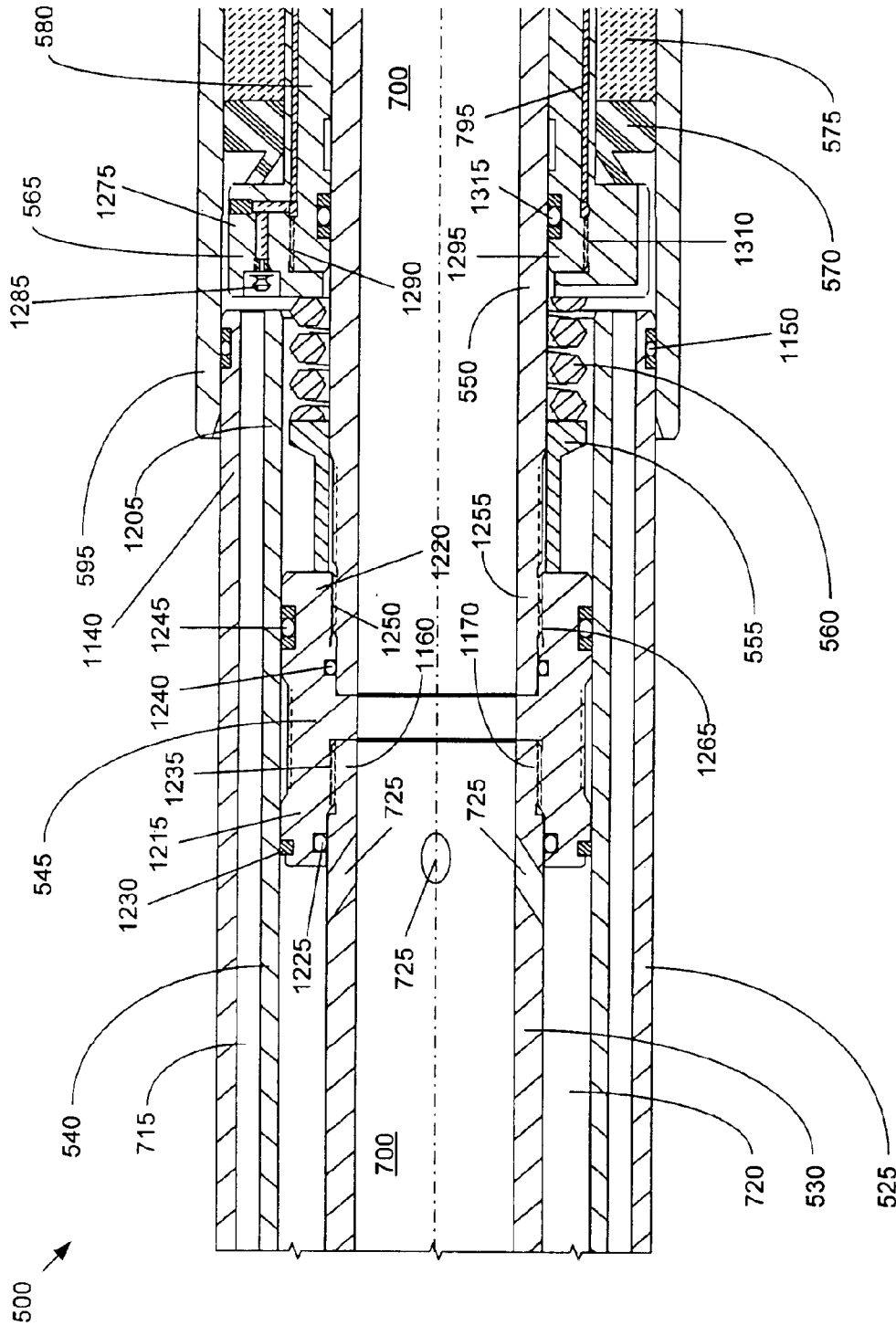


FIGURE 2G

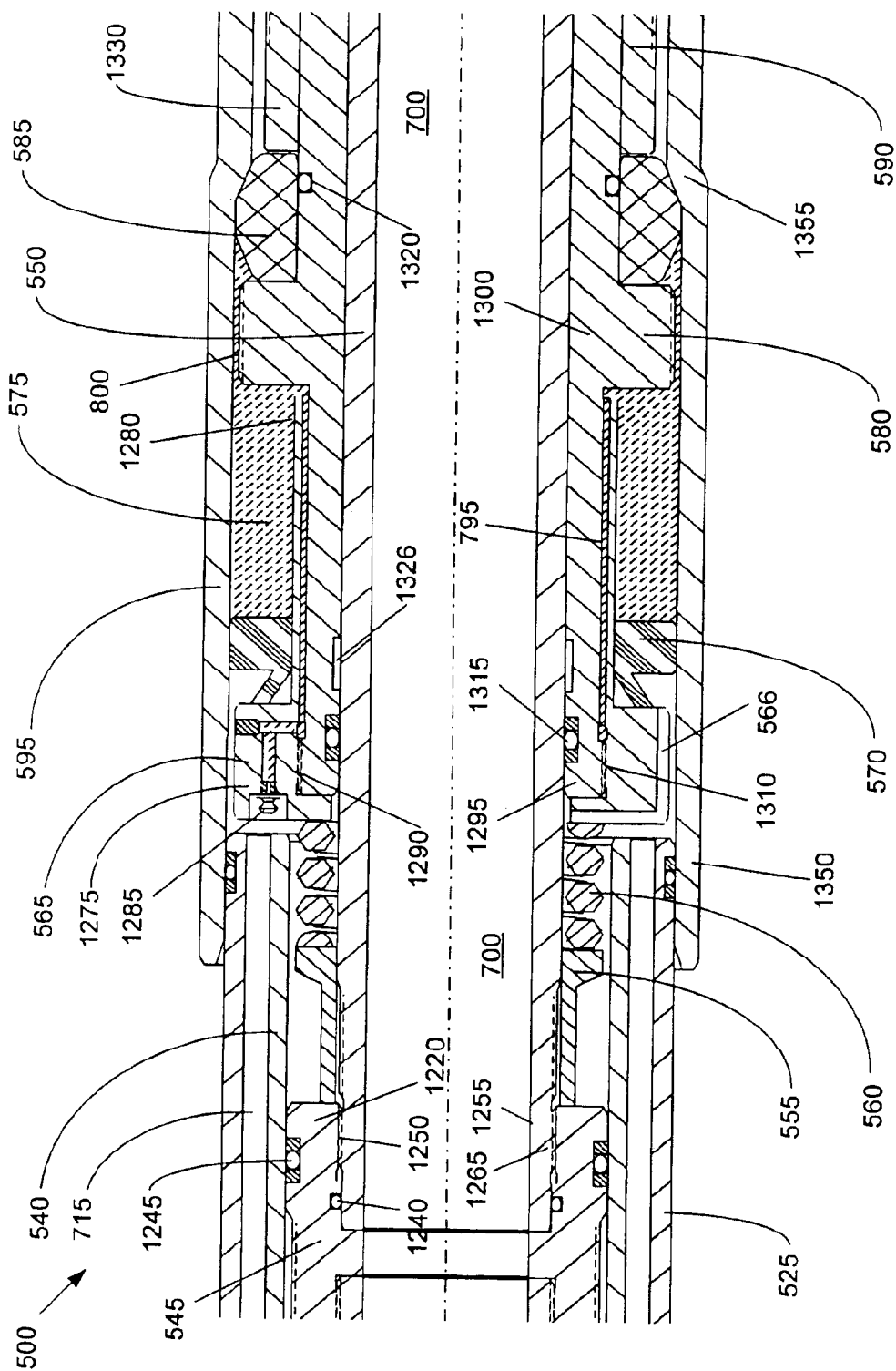


FIGURE 2H

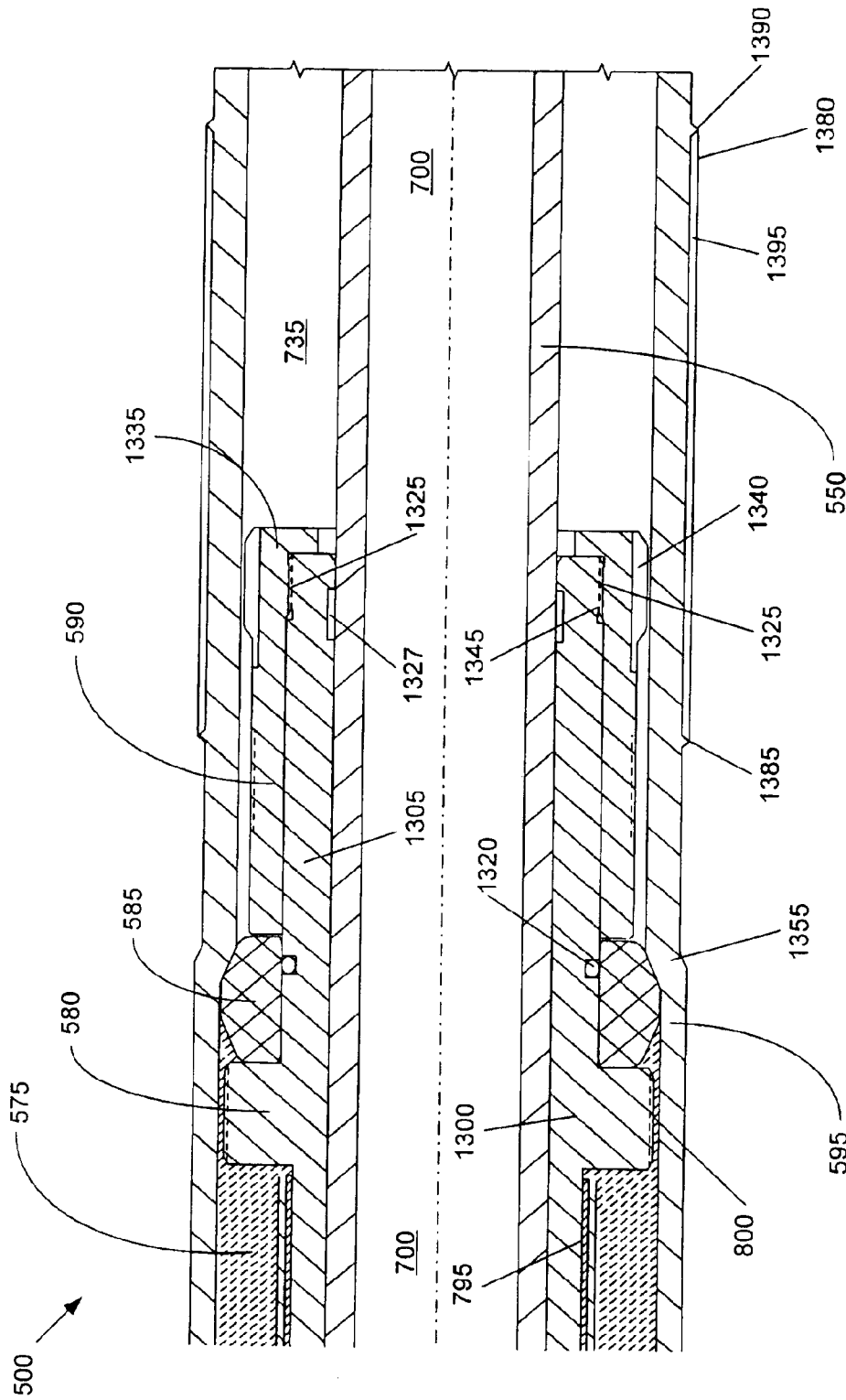


FIGURE 2I

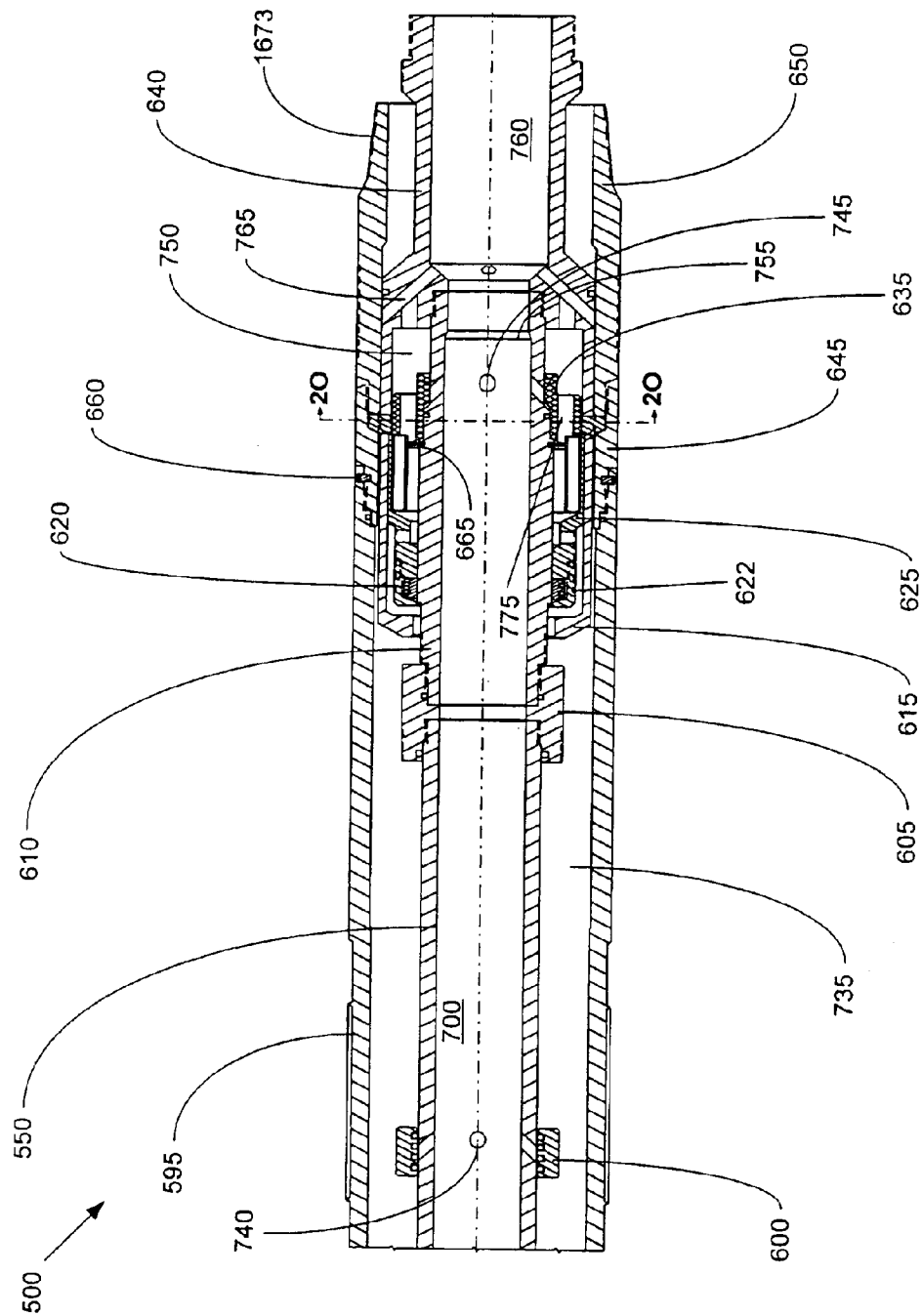


FIGURE 2J

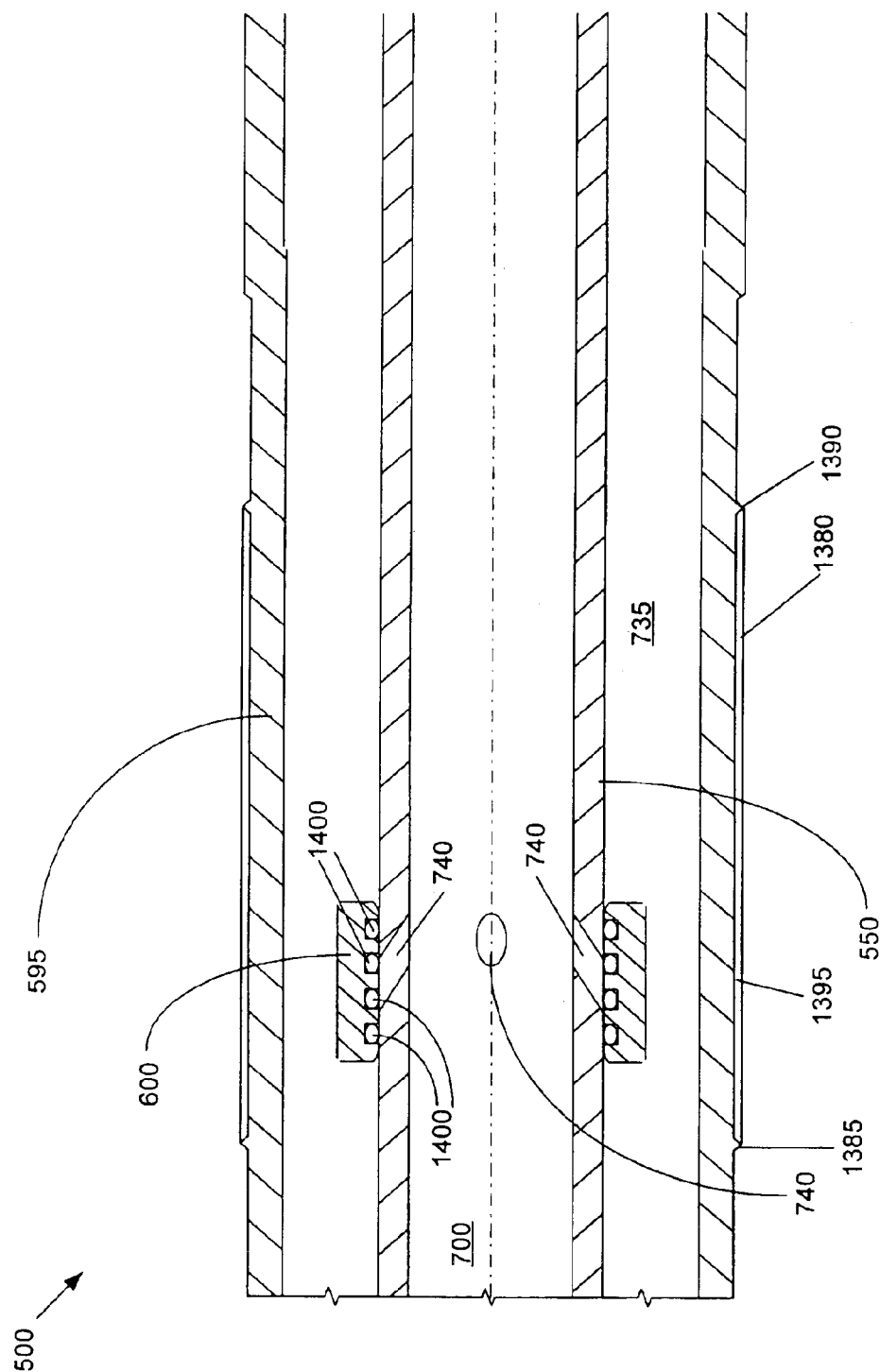


FIGURE 2K

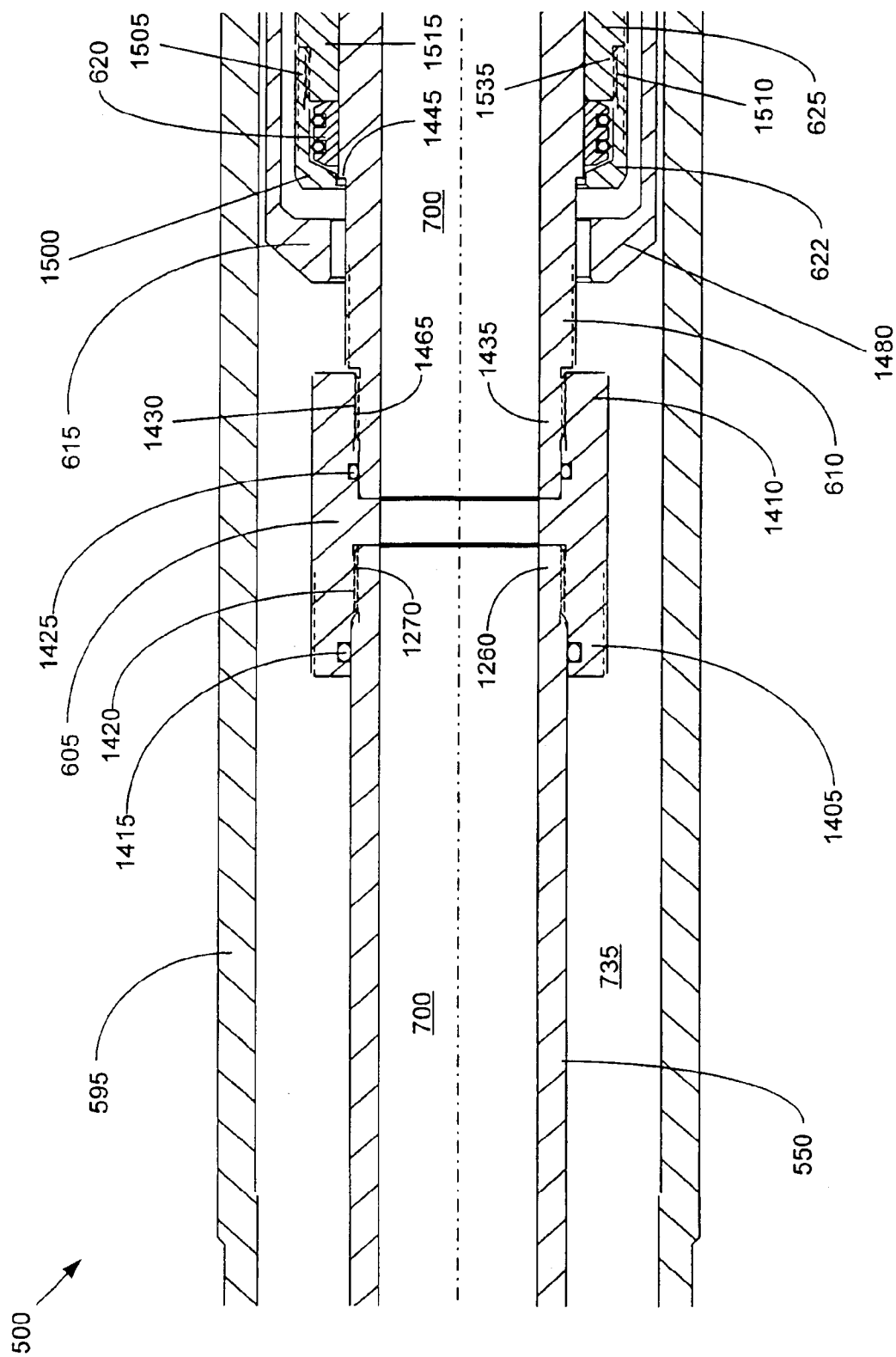


FIGURE 2L

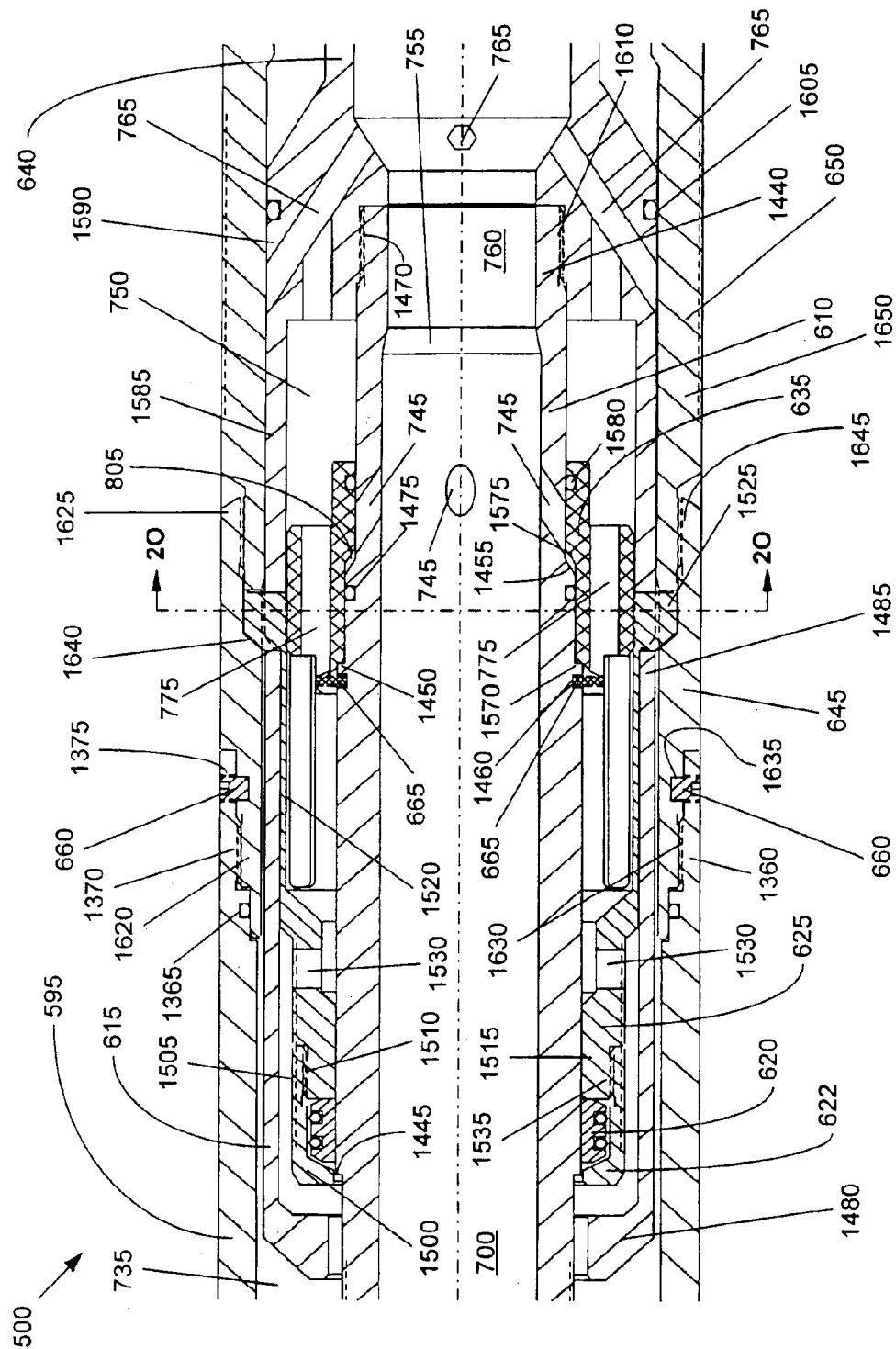


FIGURE 2M

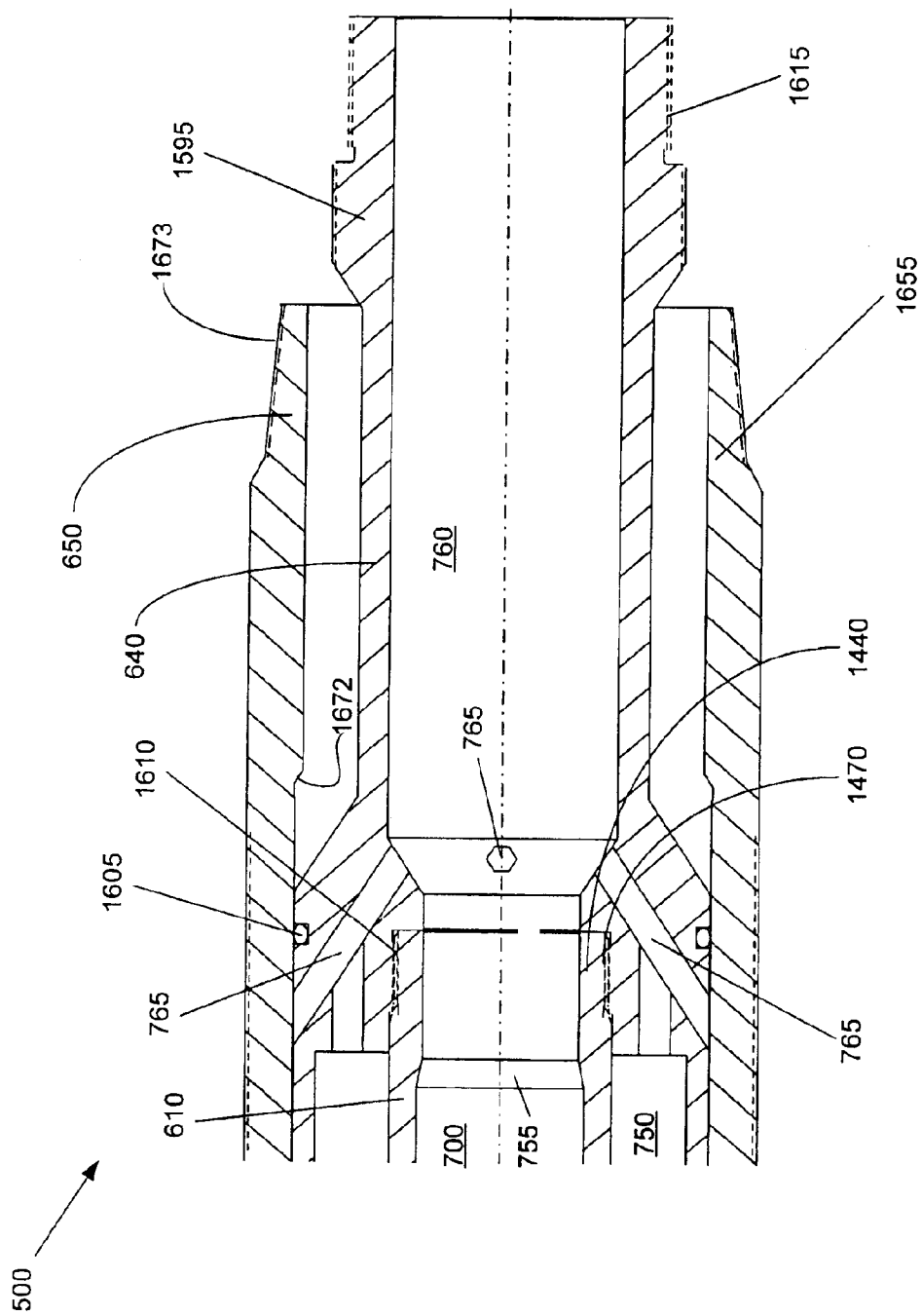


FIGURE 2N

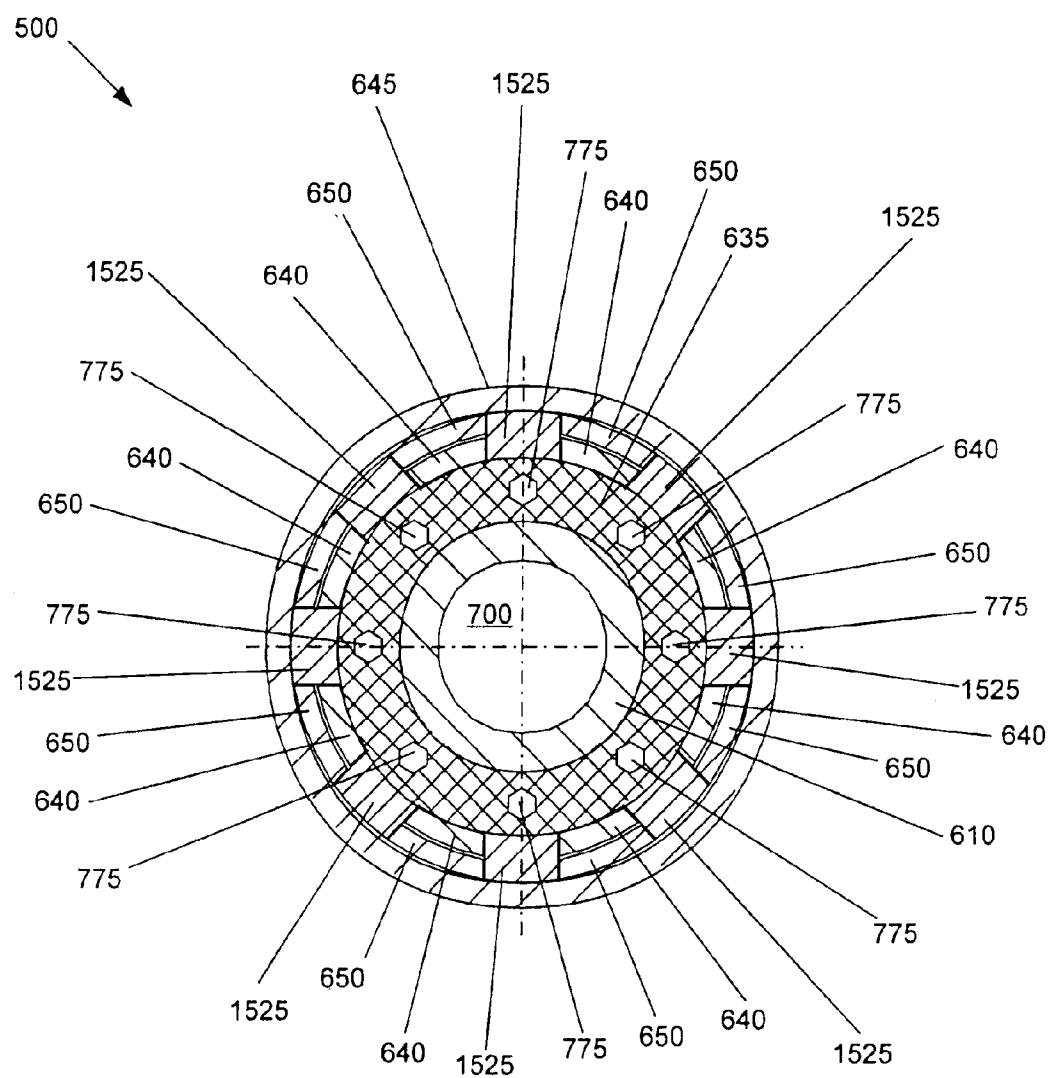


FIGURE 20

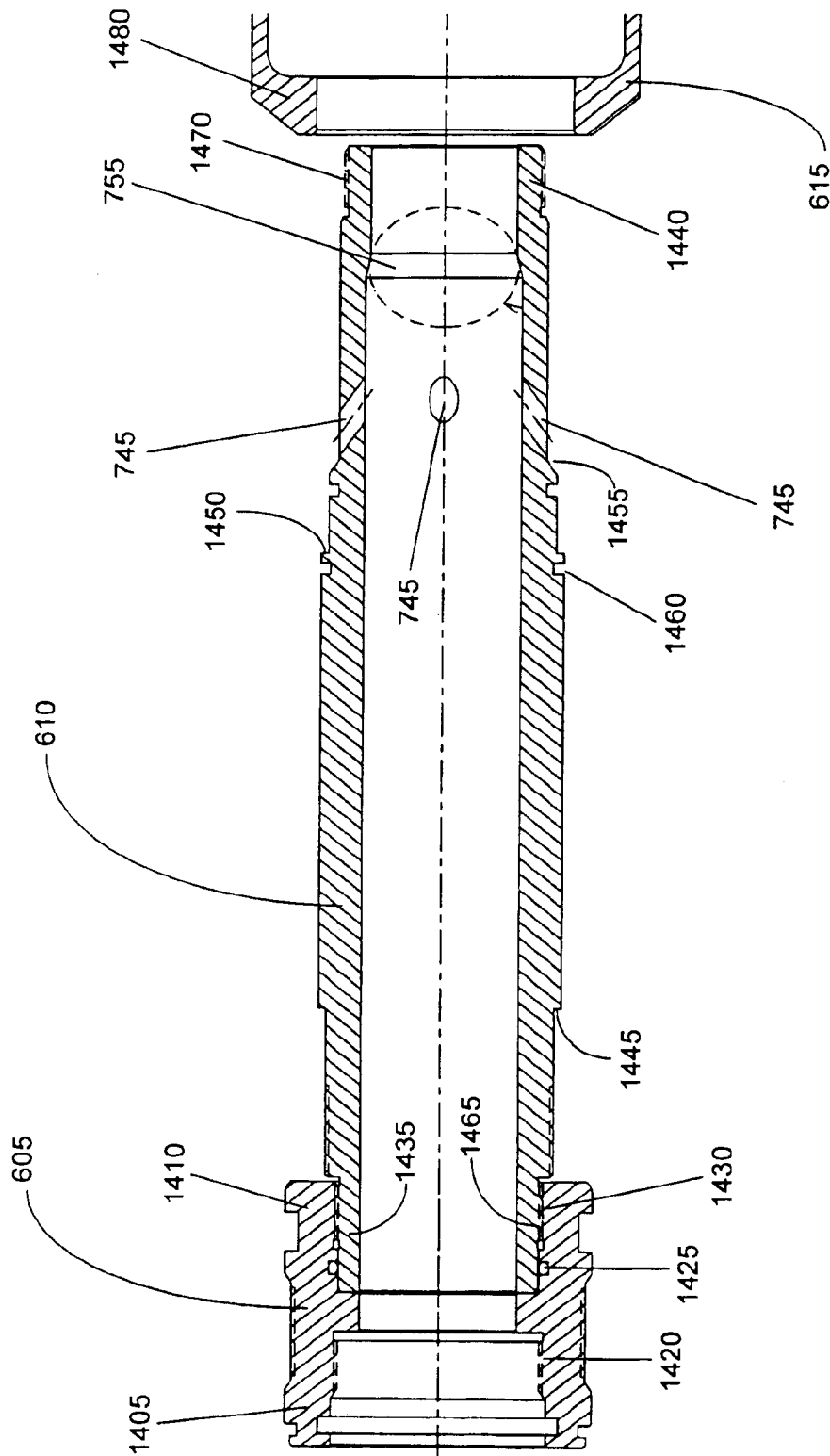


FIGURE 3A

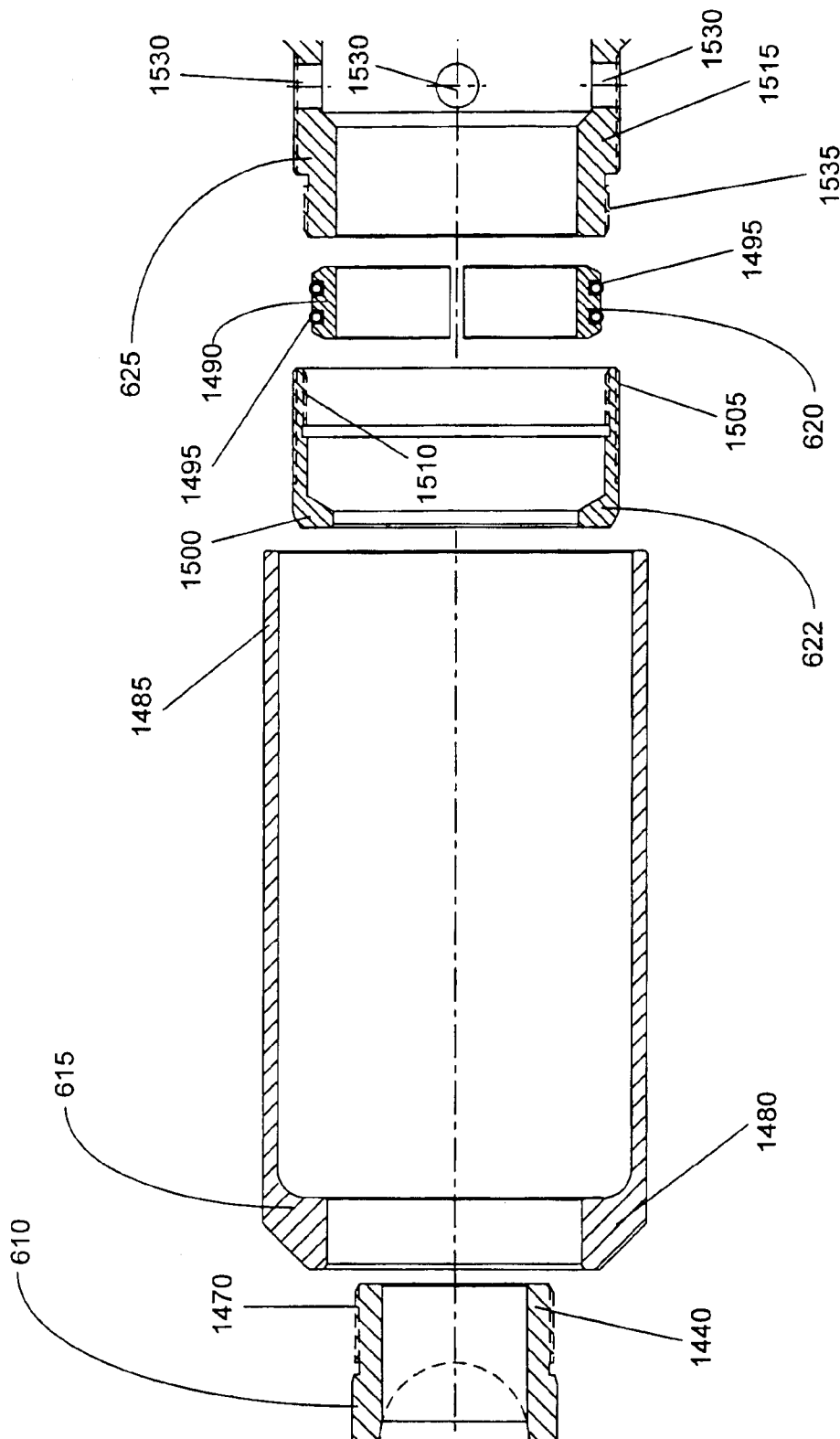


FIGURE 3B

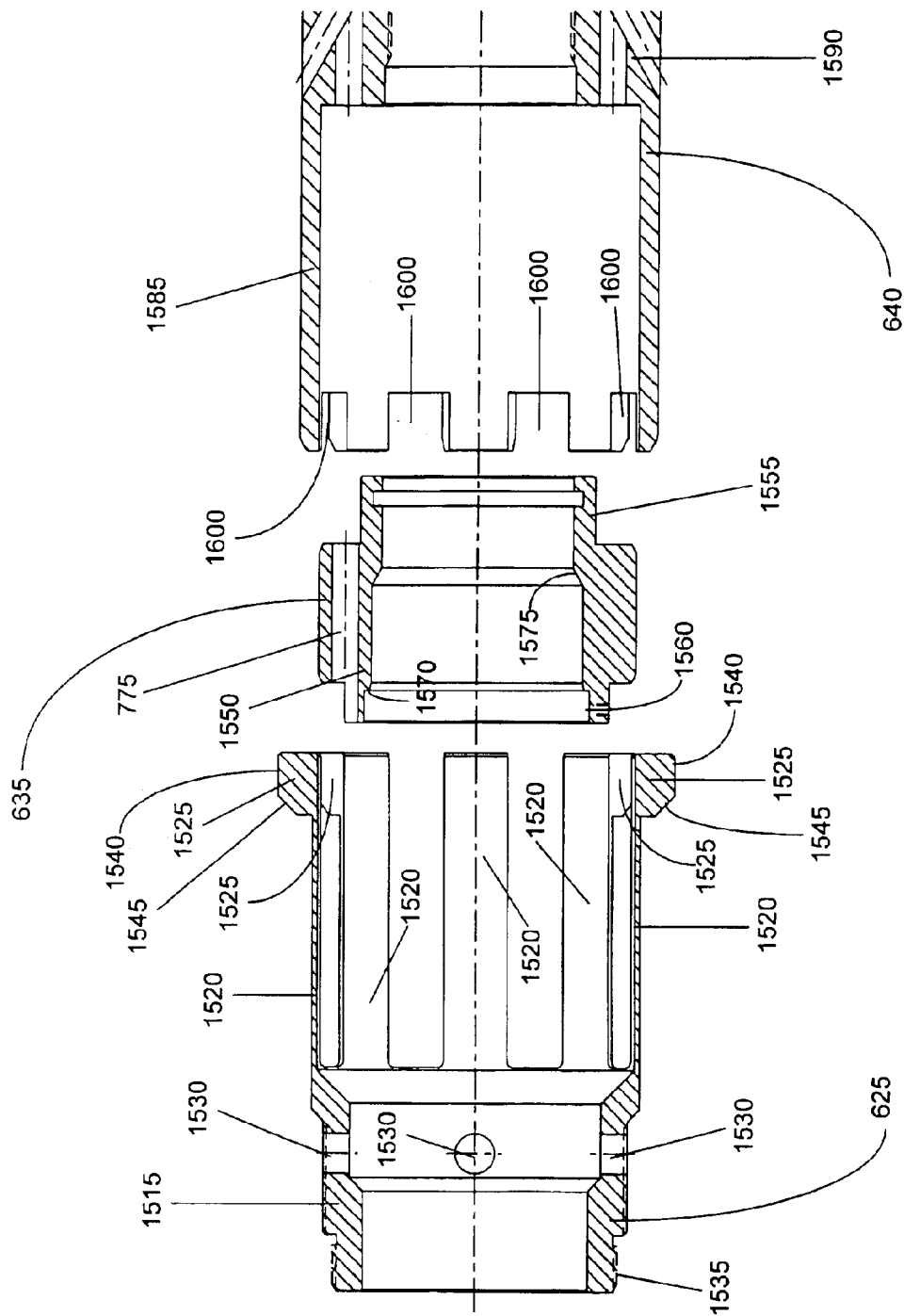


FIGURE 3C

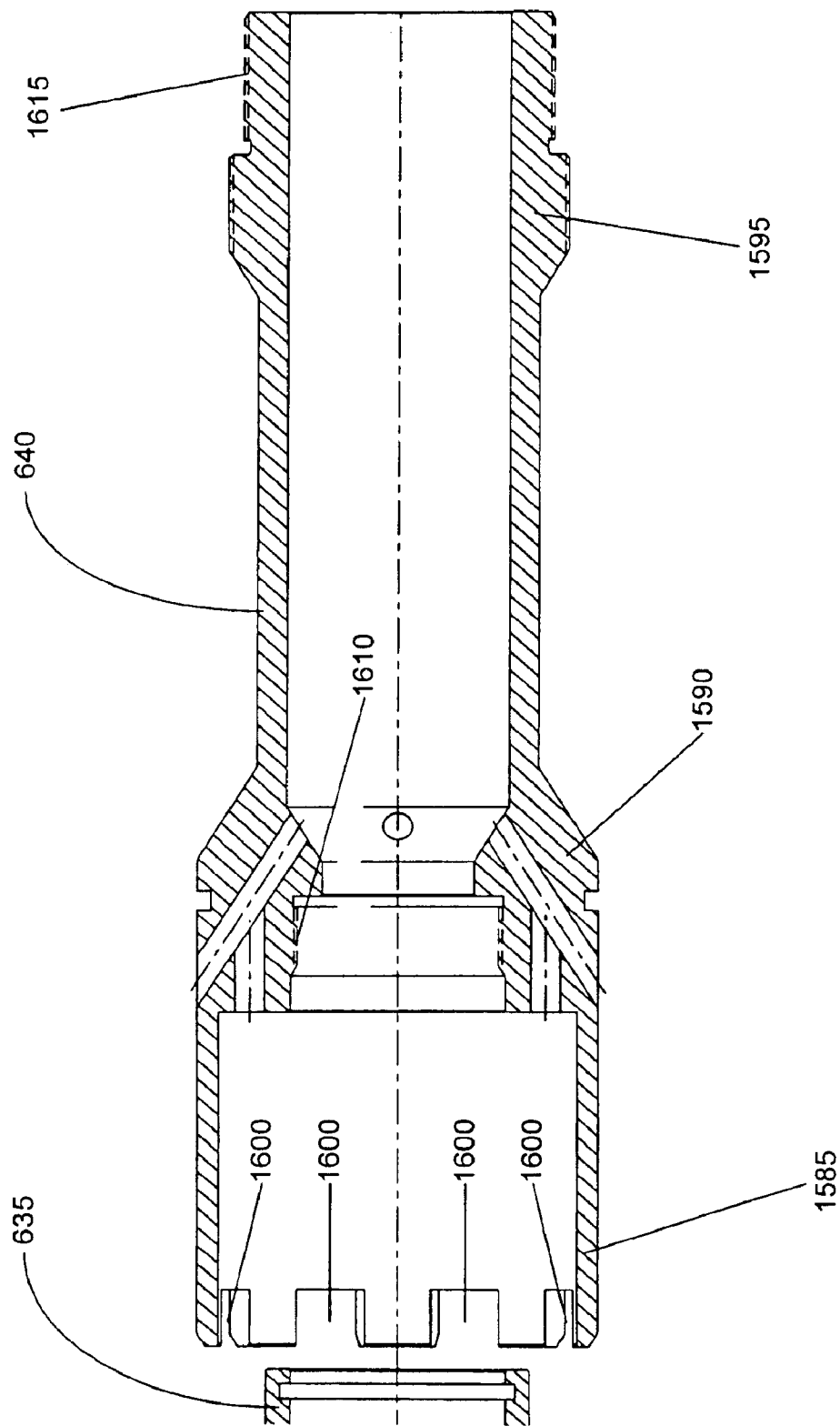


FIGURE 3D

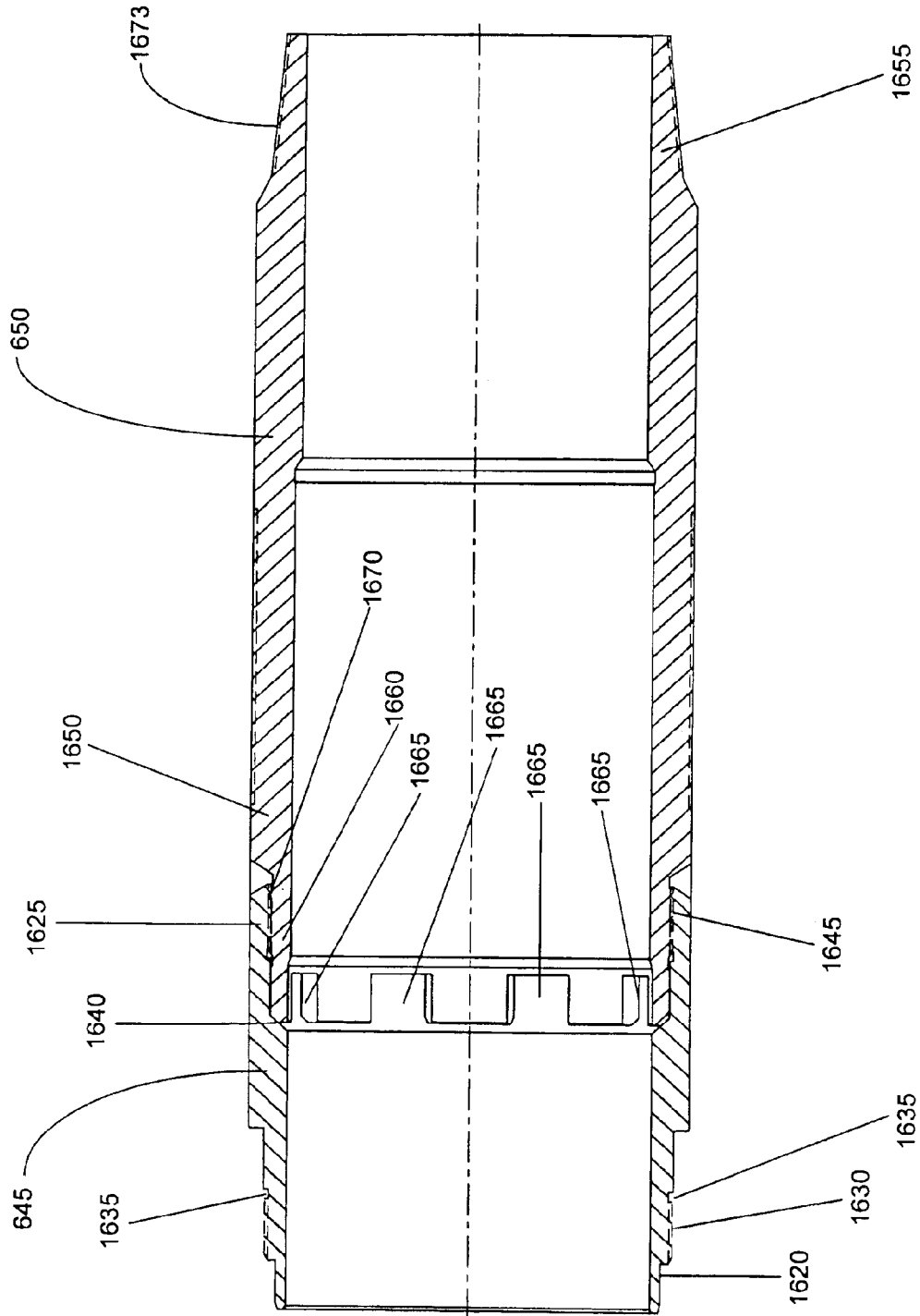


FIGURE 3E

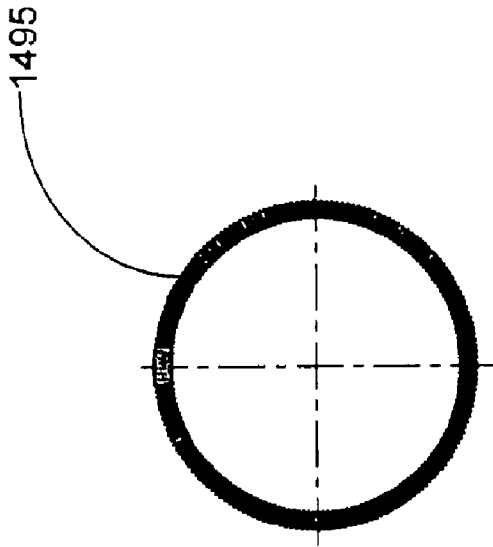


FIGURE 3F

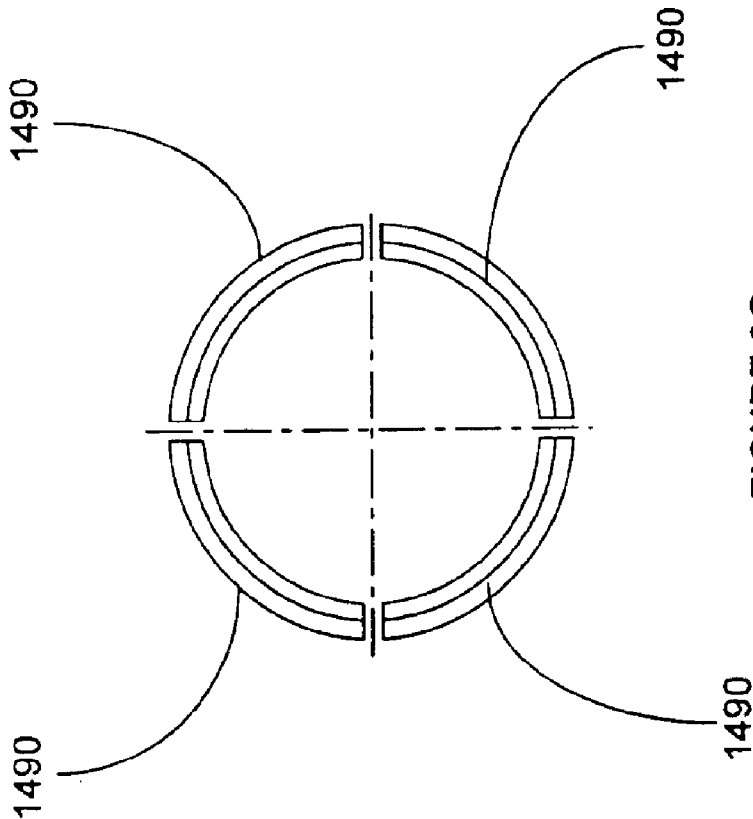


FIGURE 3G

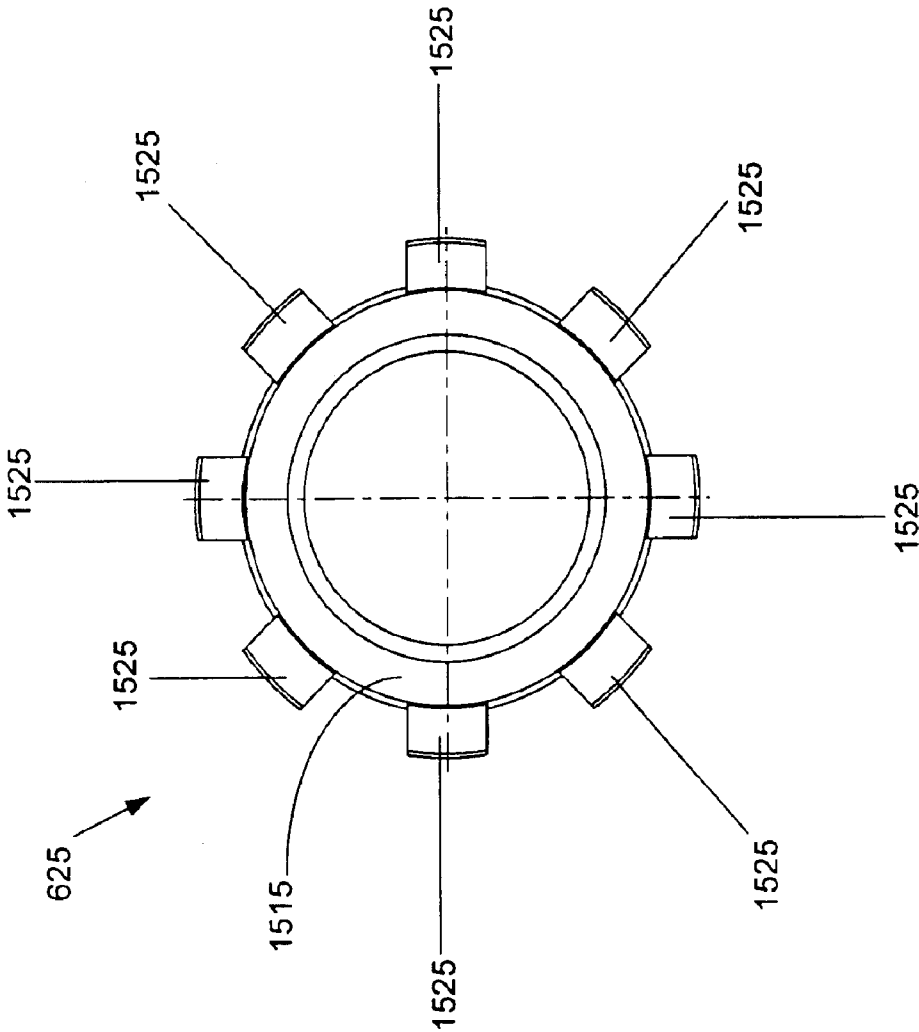


FIGURE 3H

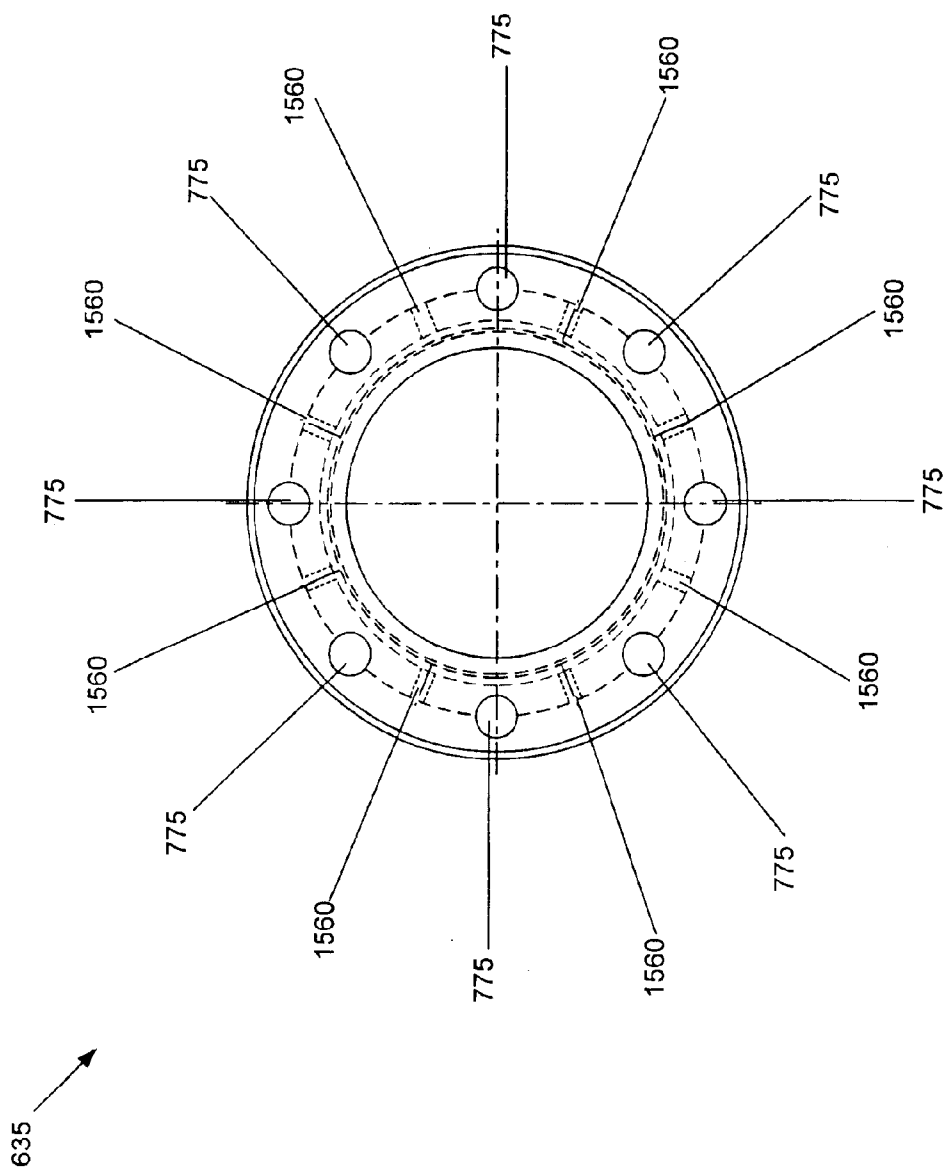


FIGURE 3I

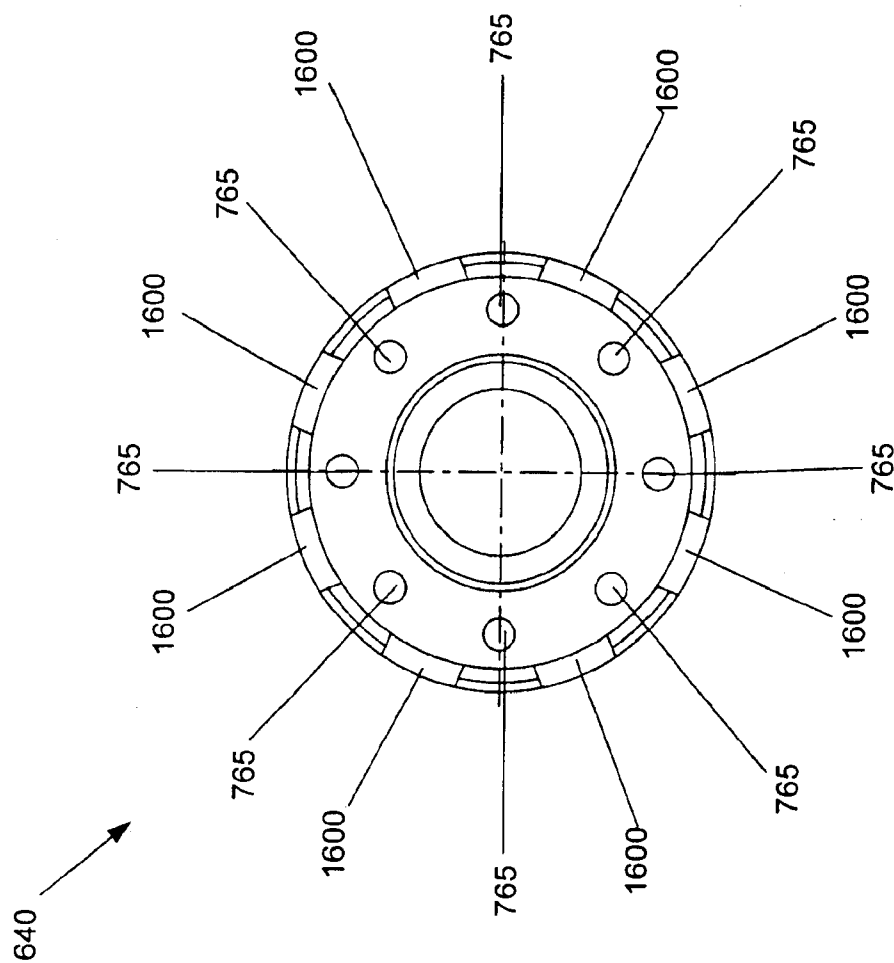


FIGURE 3J

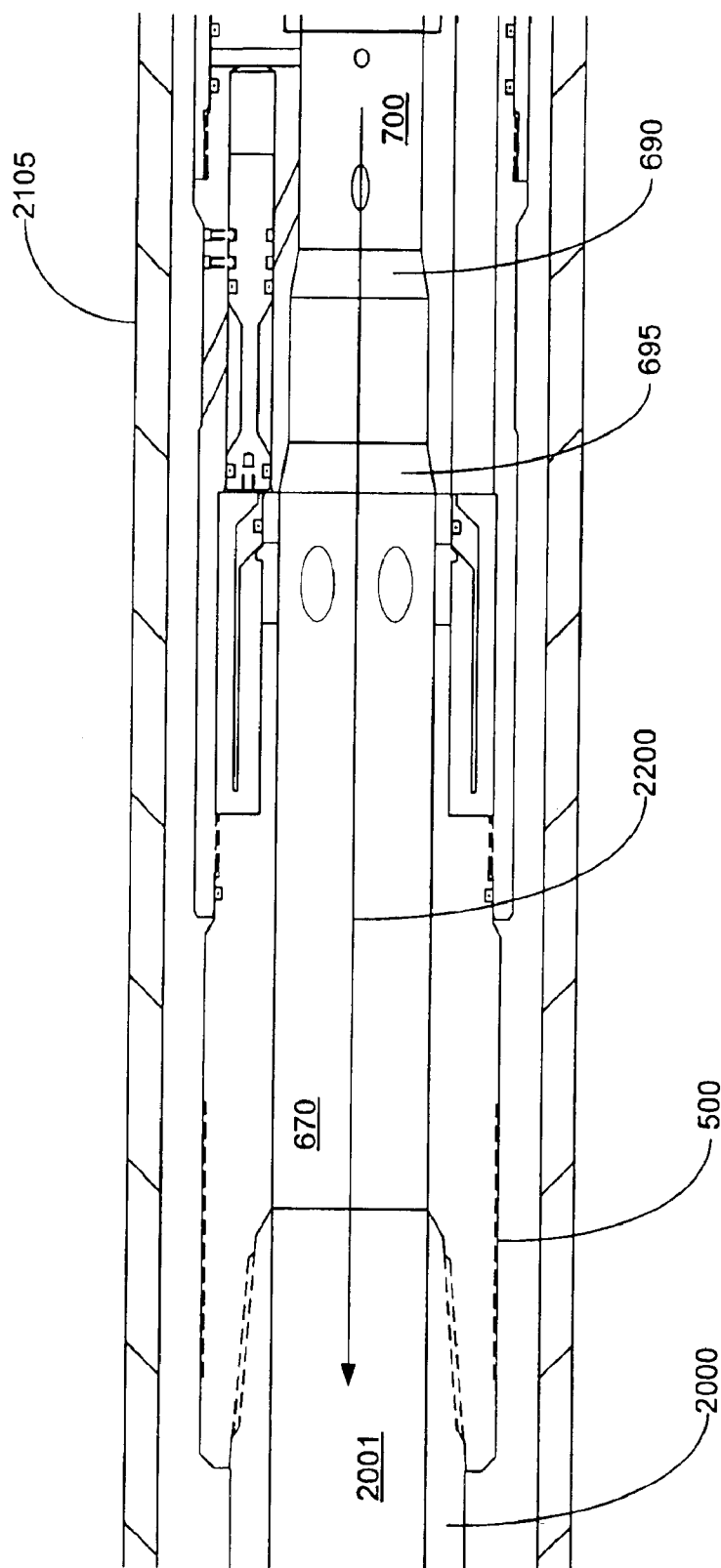


FIGURE 4A

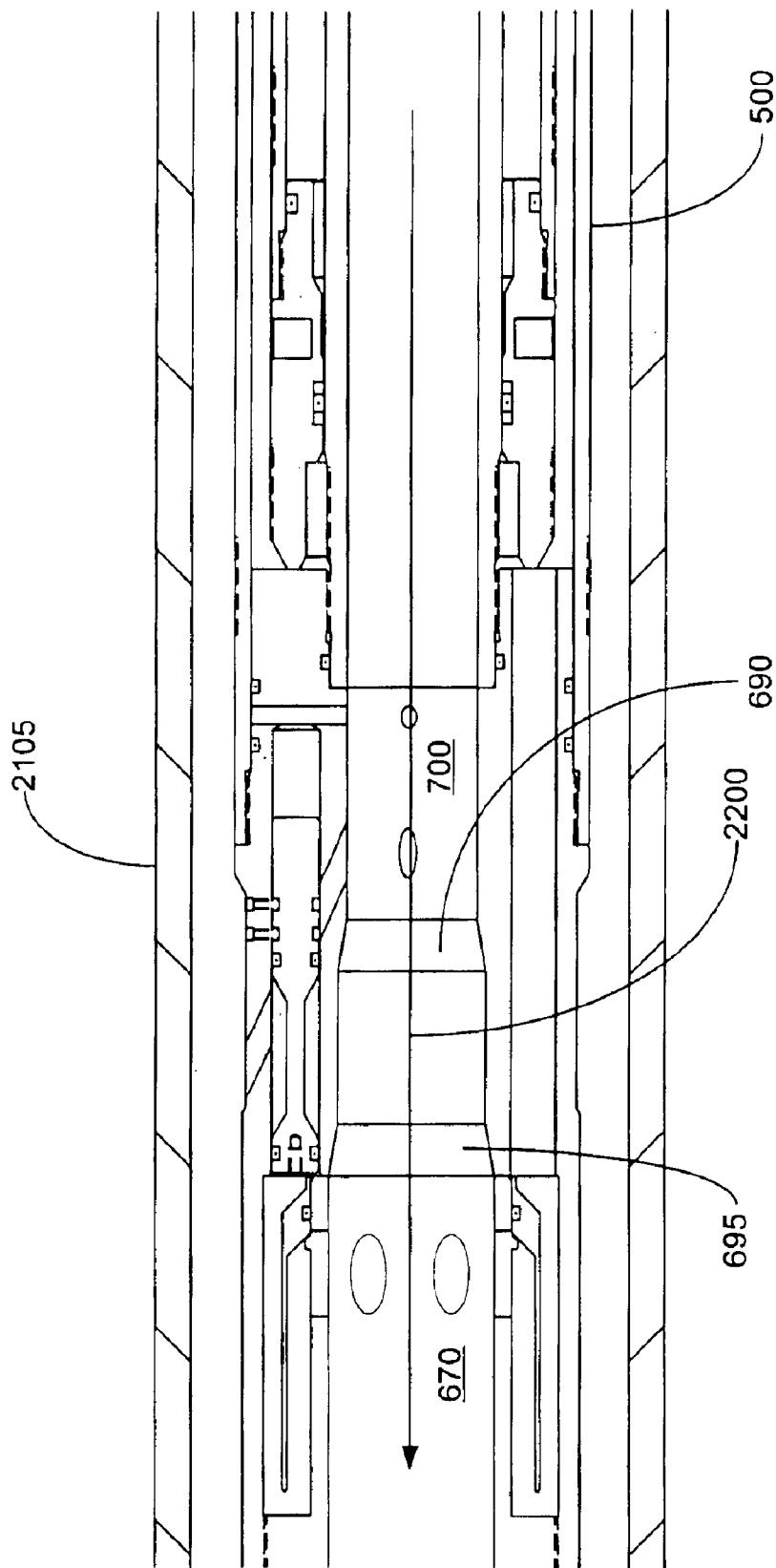


FIGURE 4B

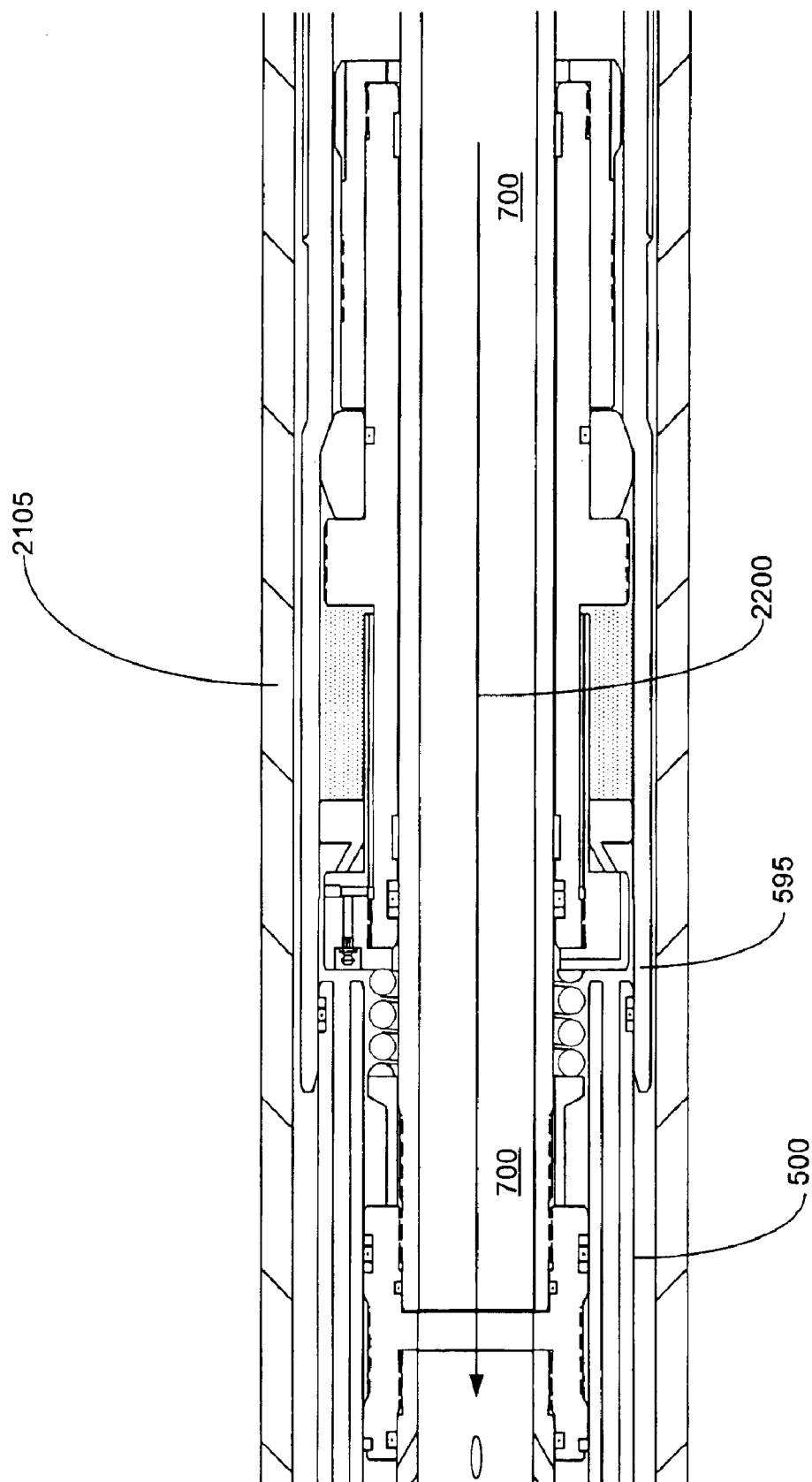


FIGURE 4C

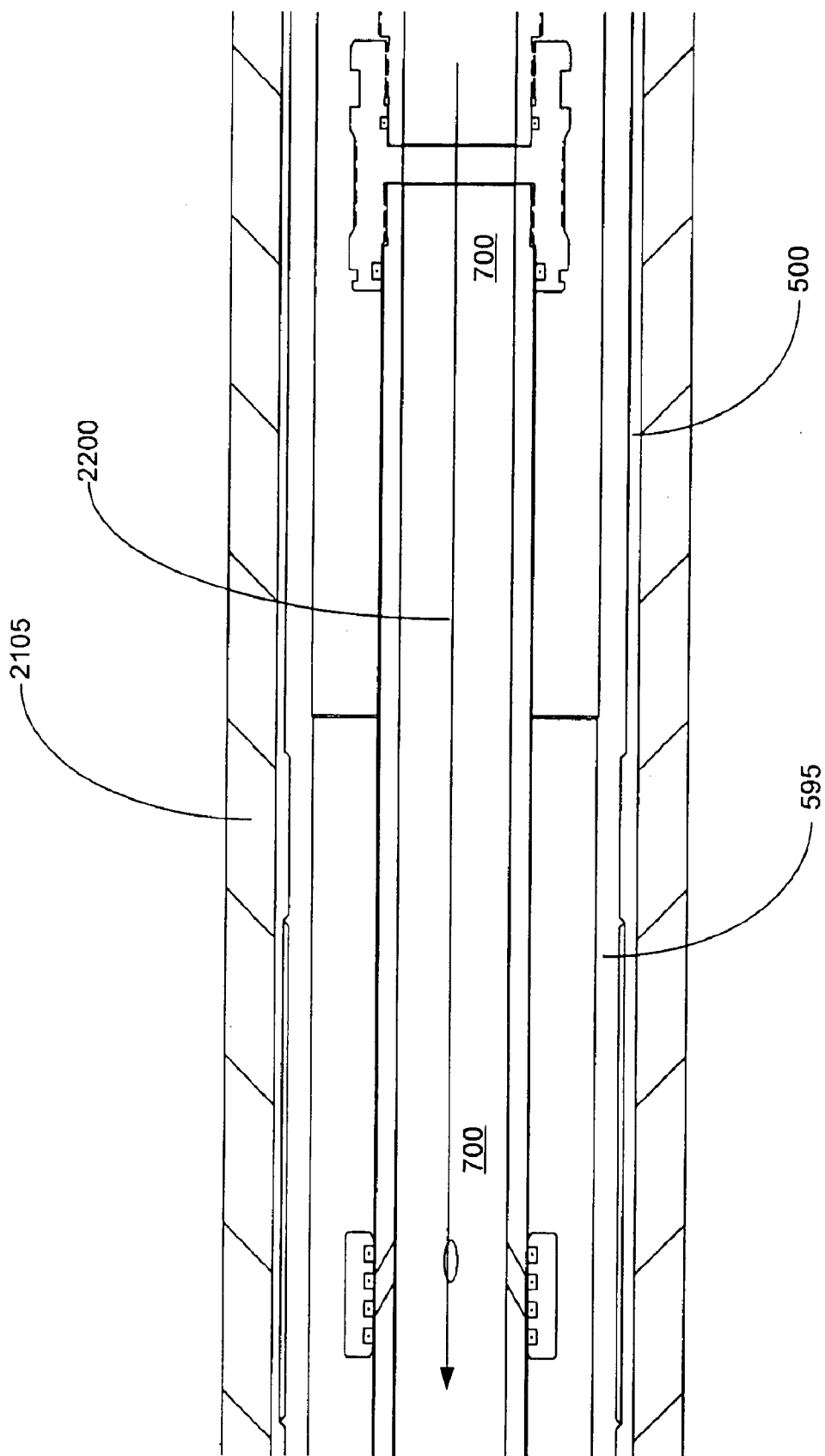


FIGURE 4D

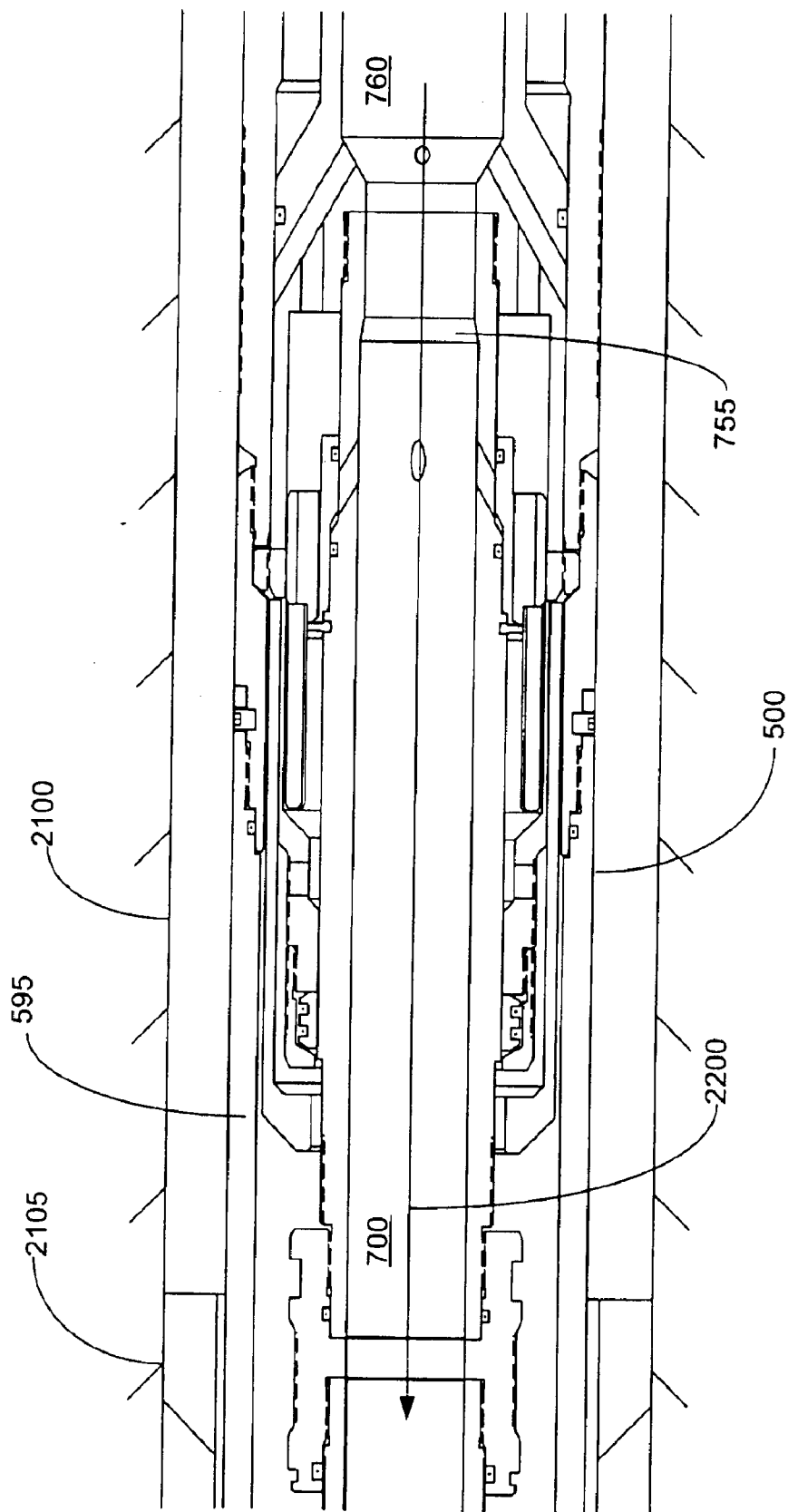


FIGURE 4E

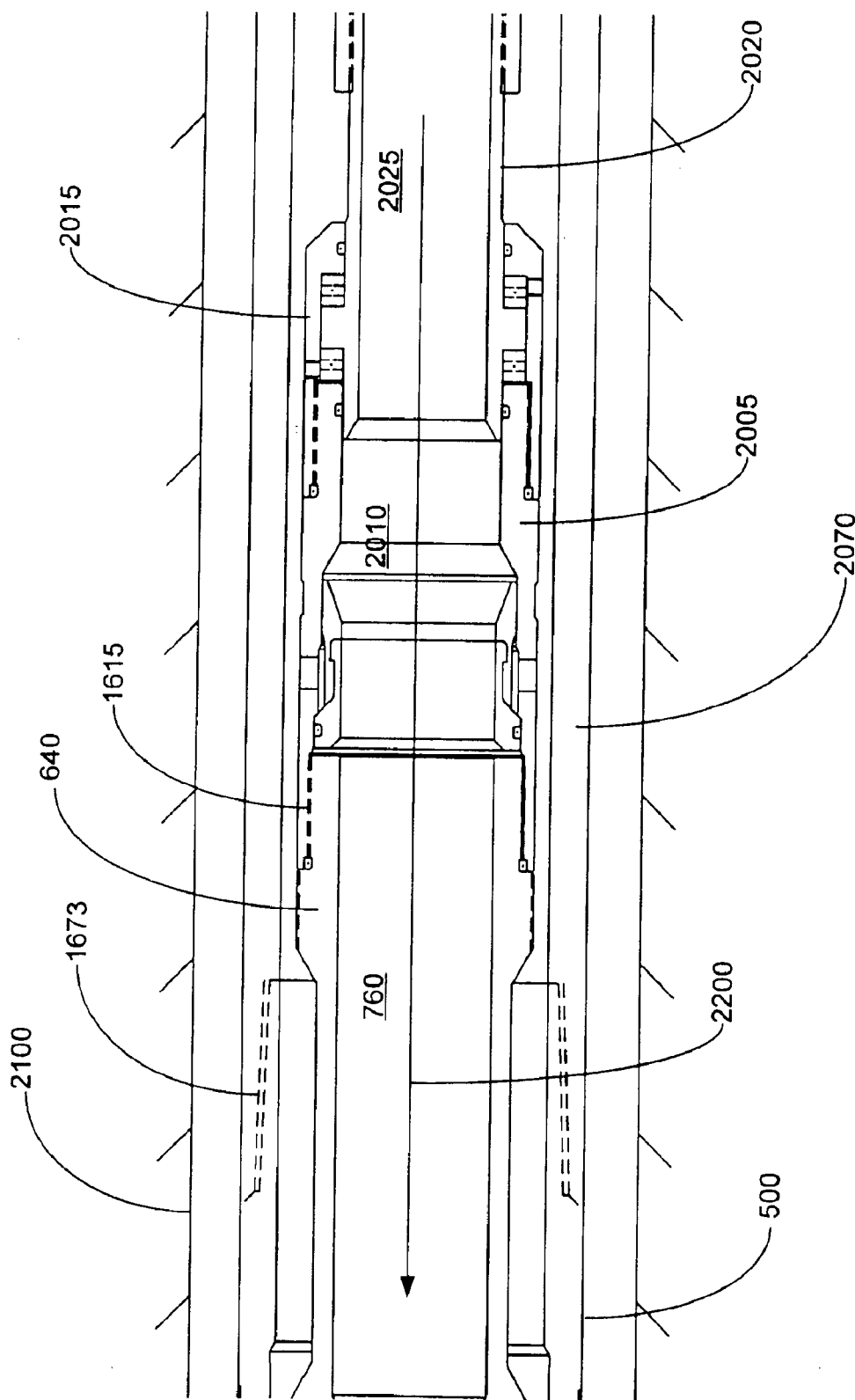


FIGURE 4F

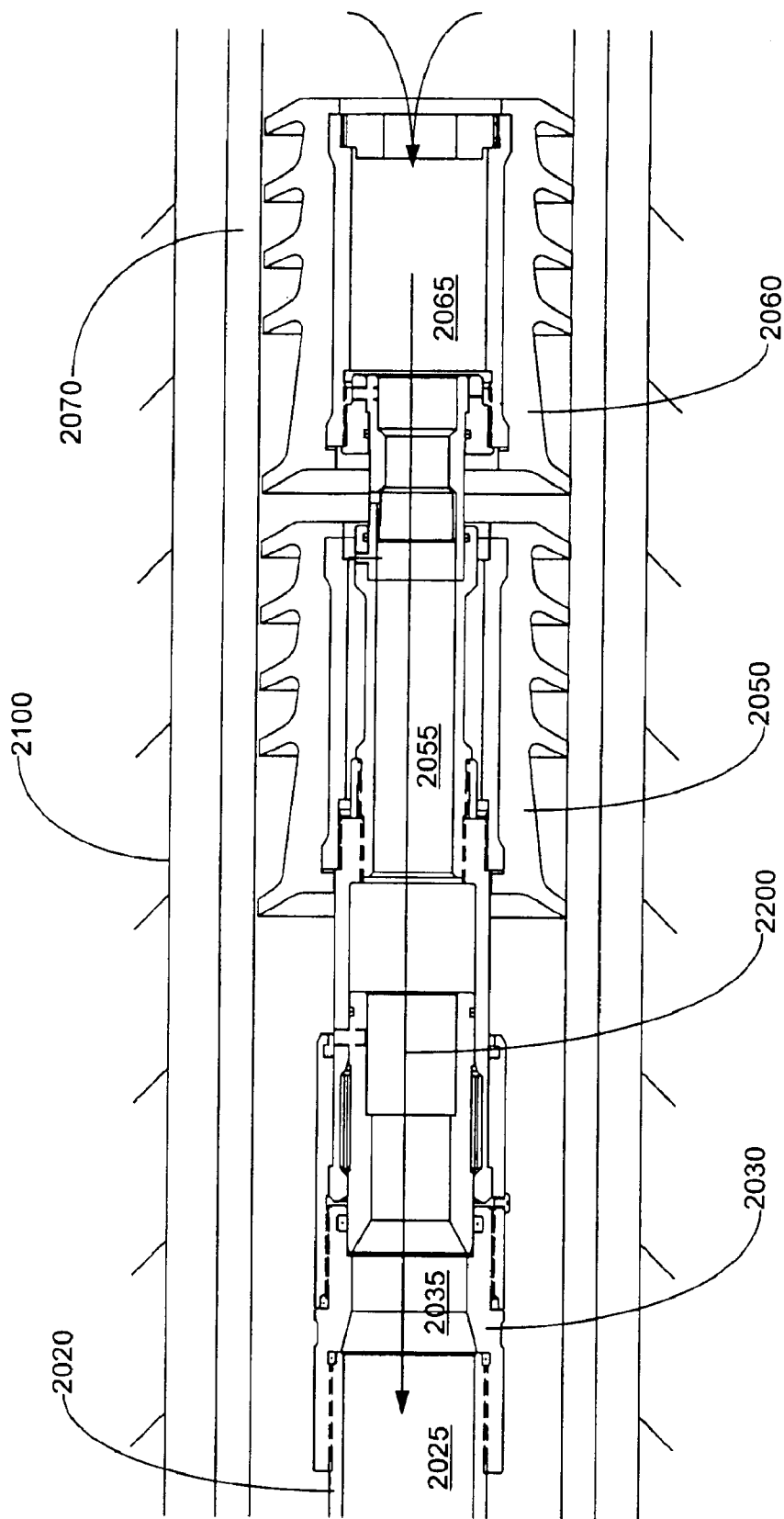


FIGURE 4G

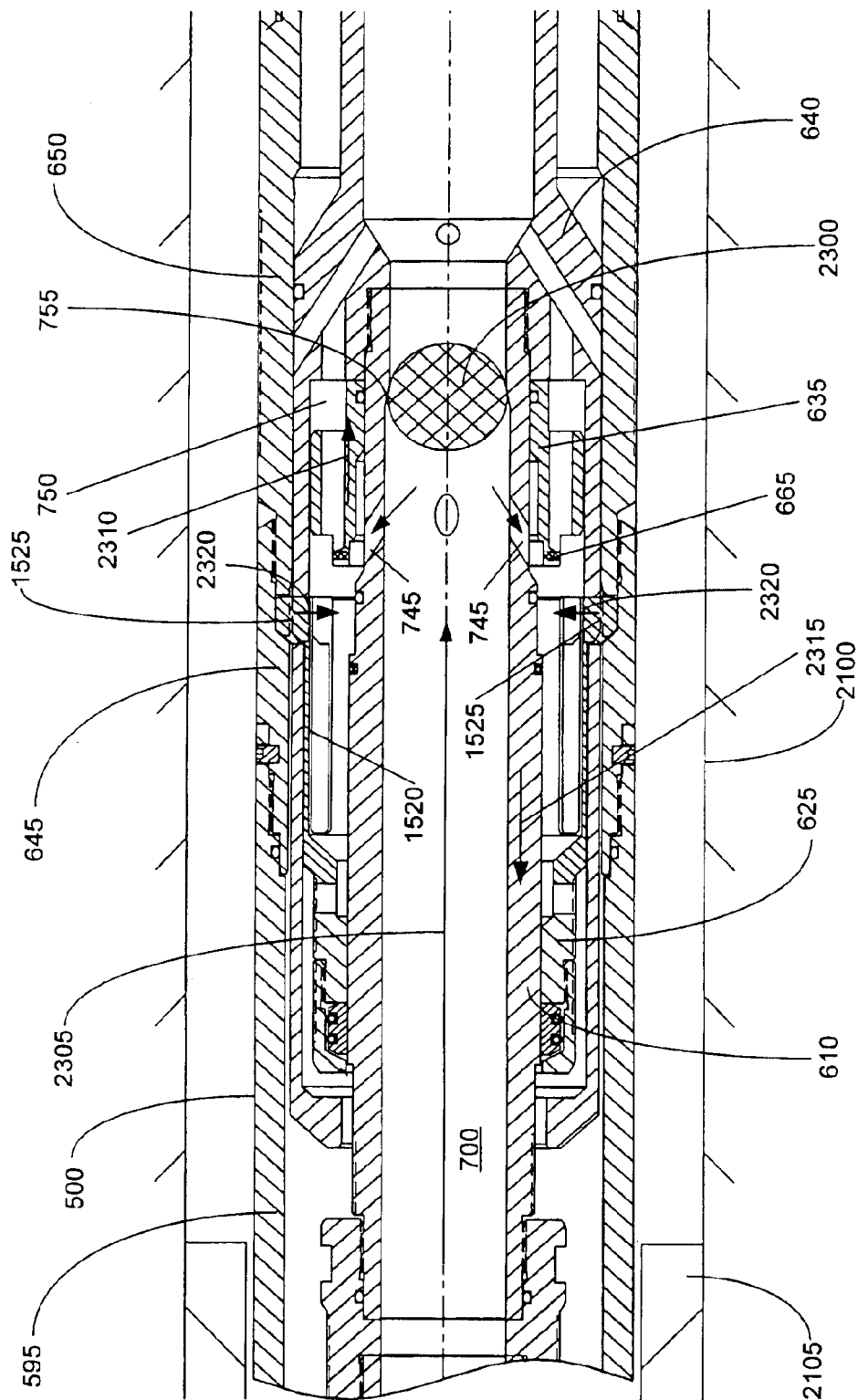


FIGURE 5A

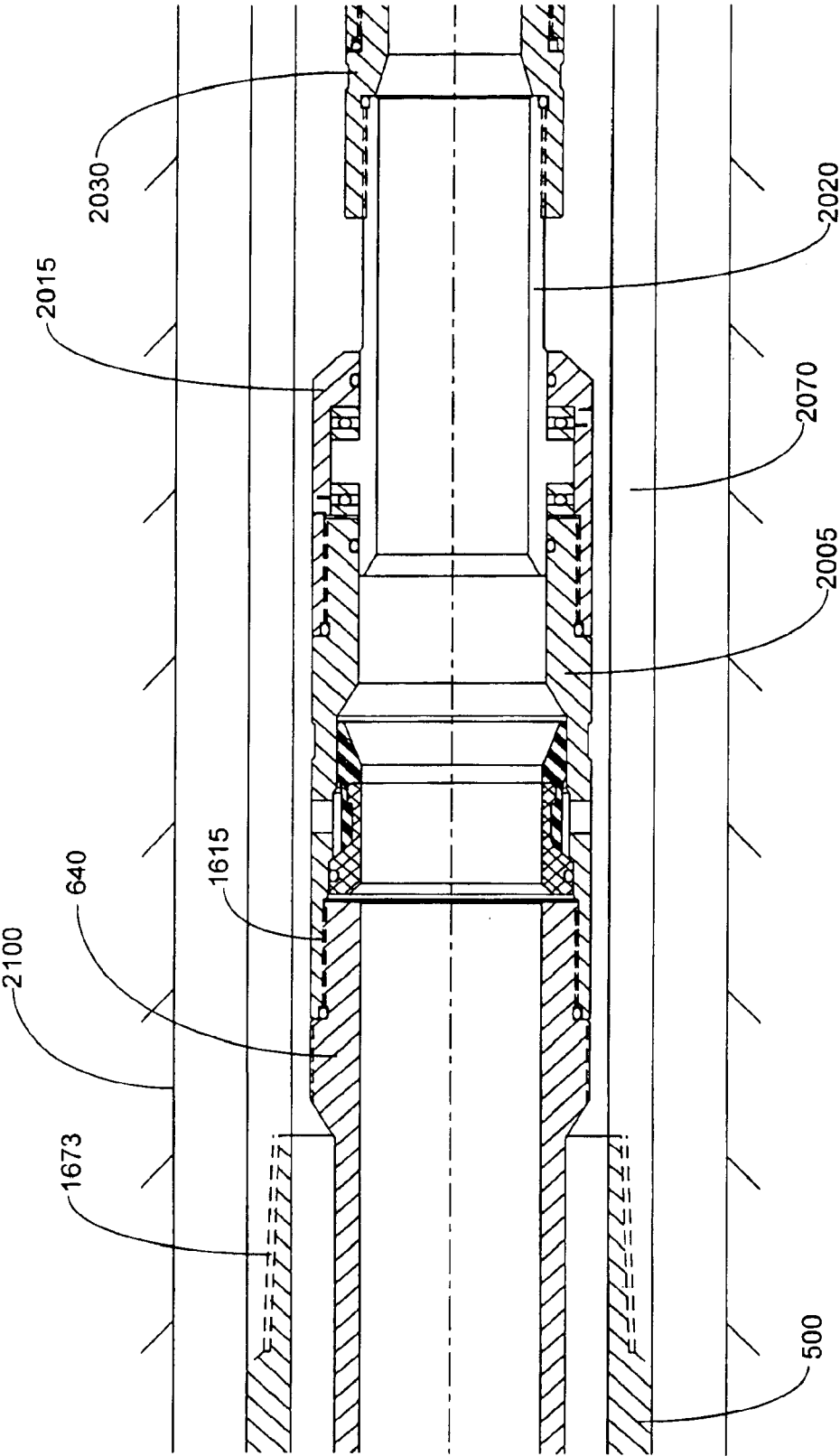


FIGURE 5B

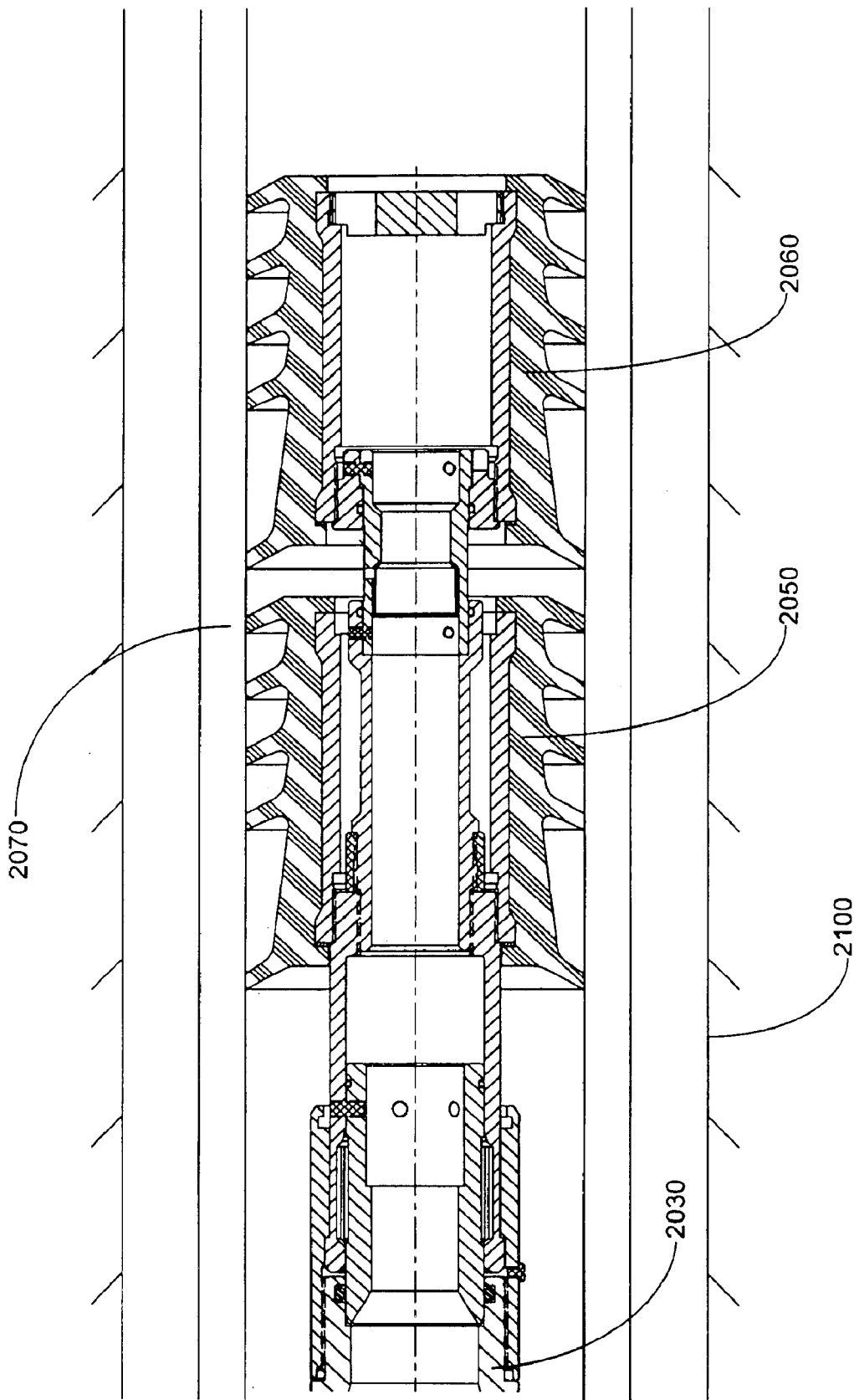


FIGURE 5C

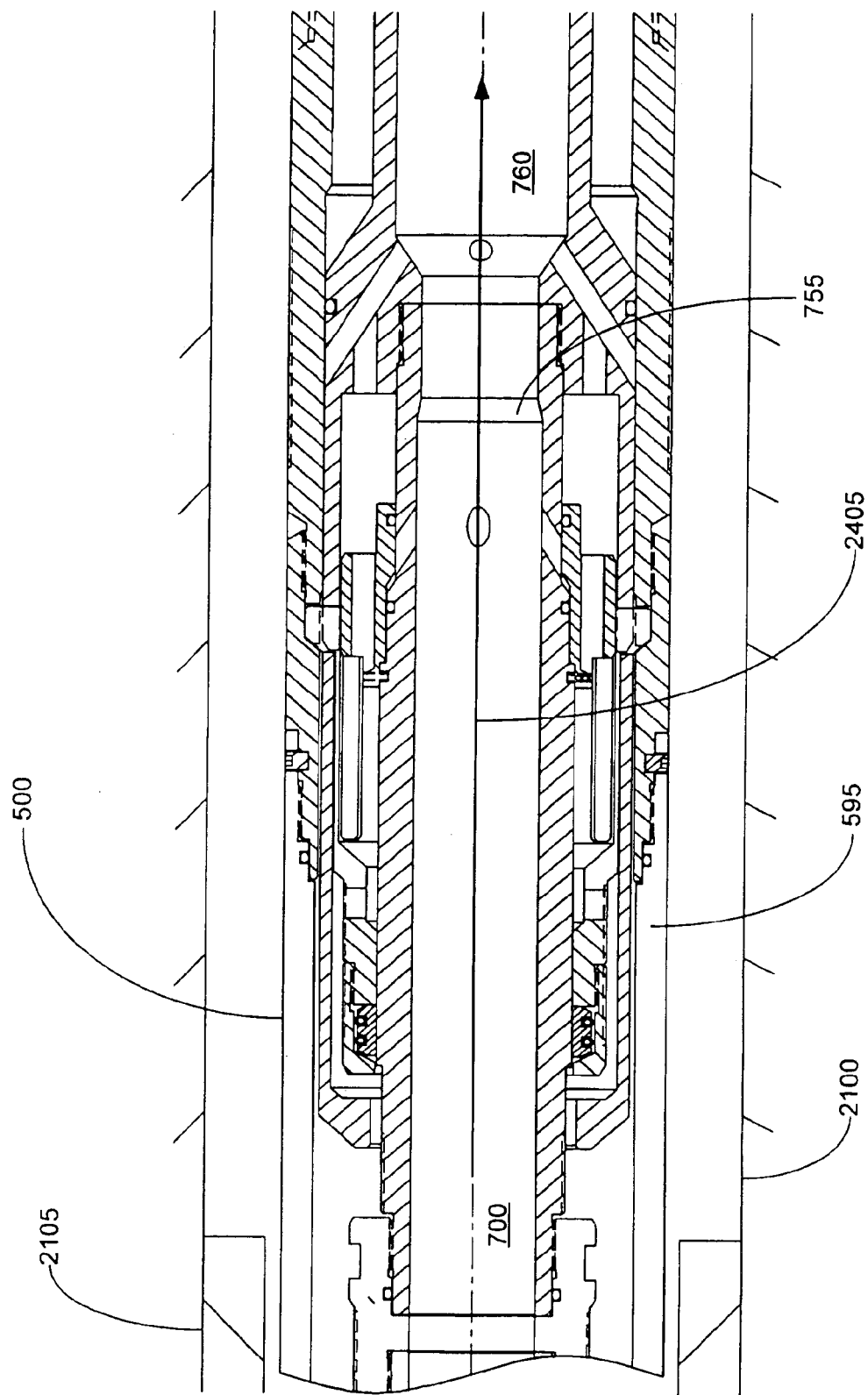


FIGURE 6A

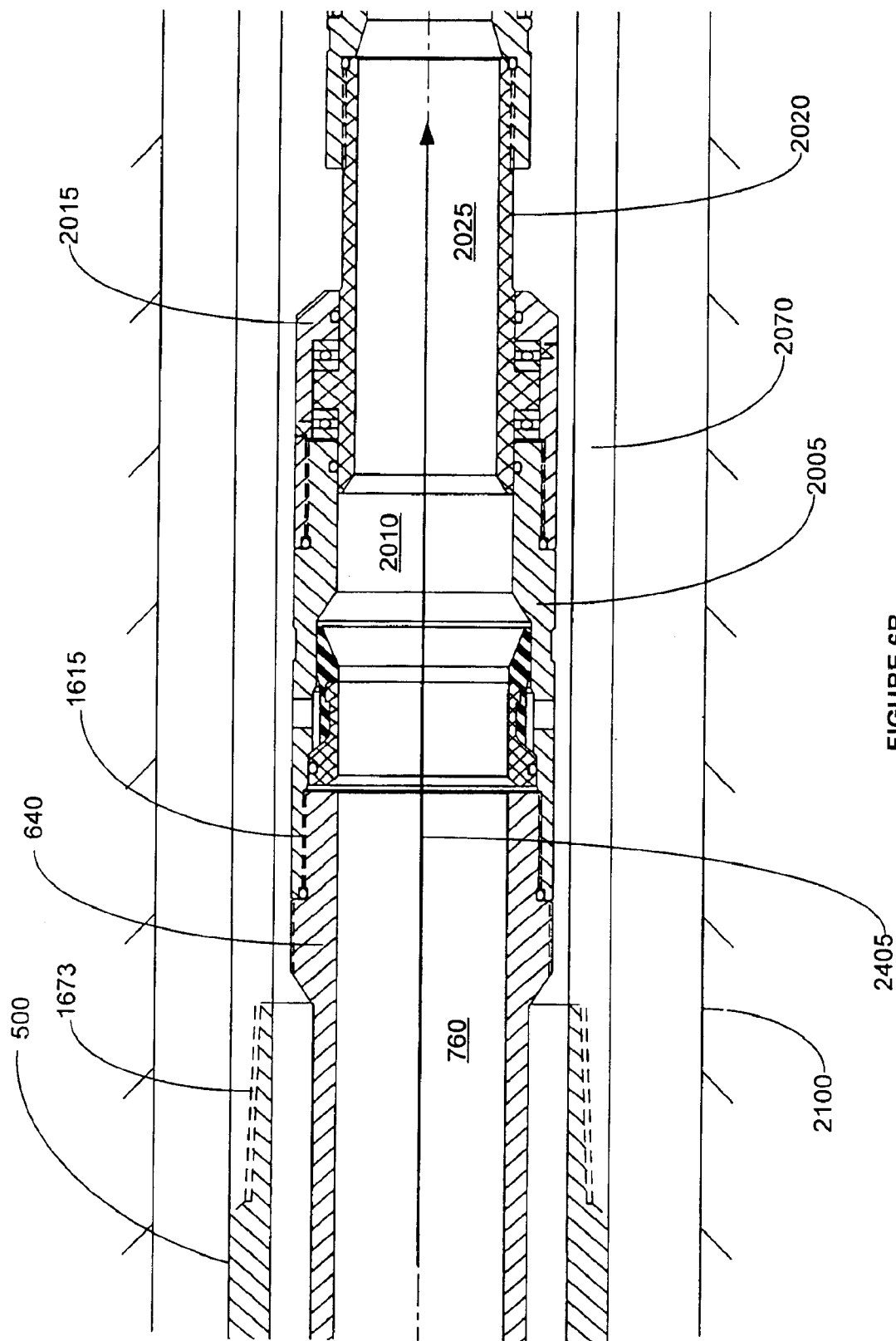


FIGURE 6B

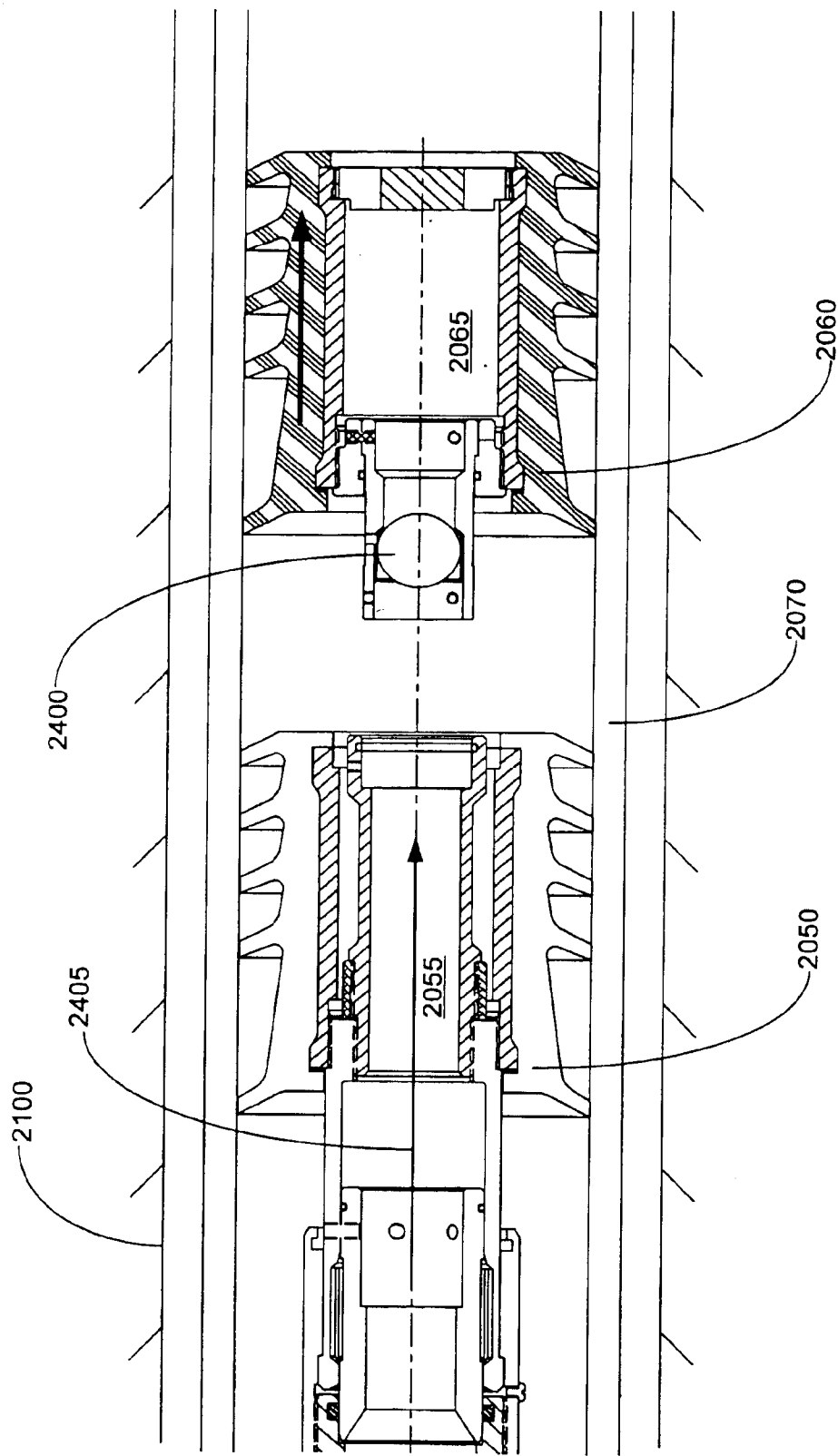


FIGURE 6C

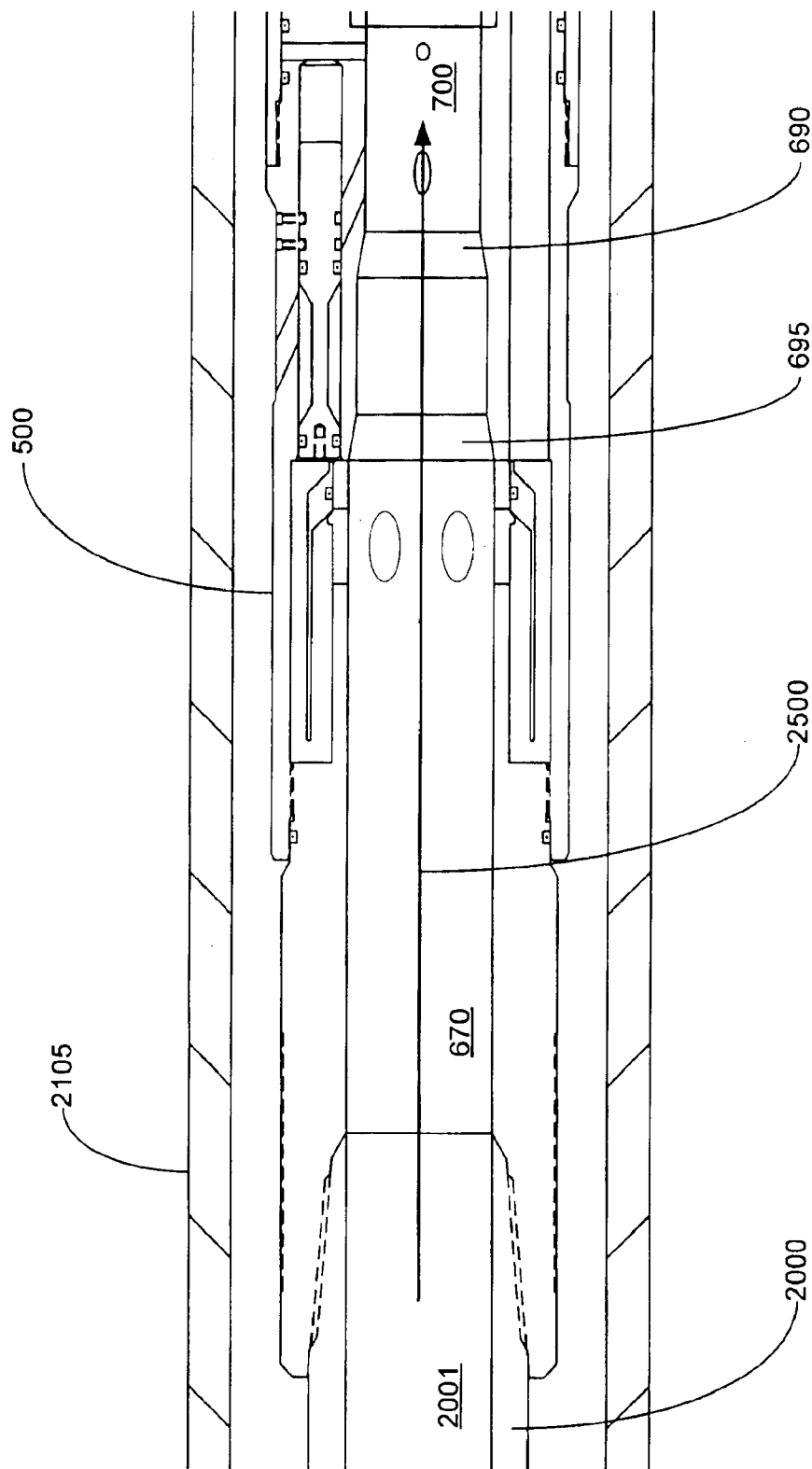
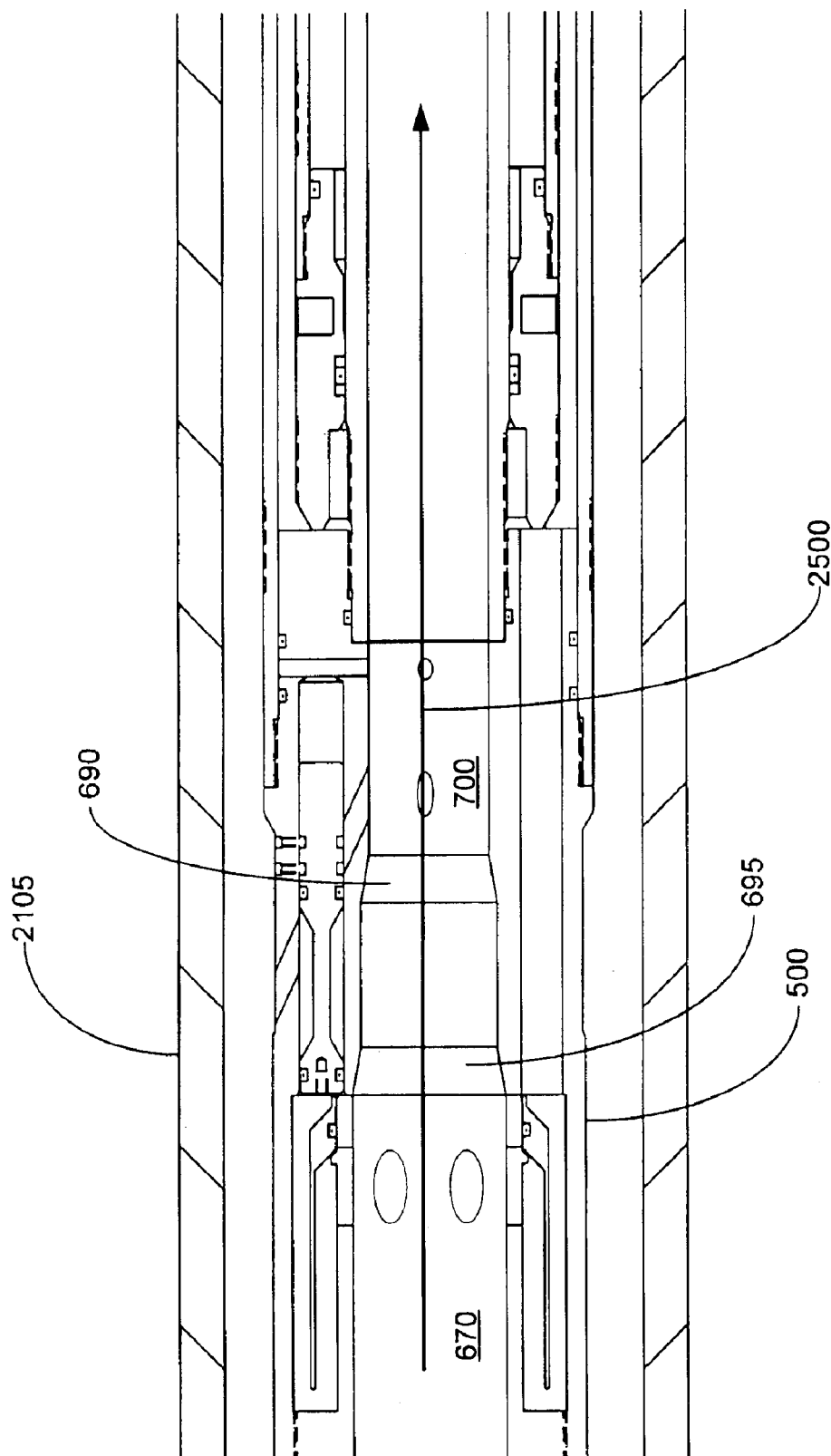


FIGURE 7A



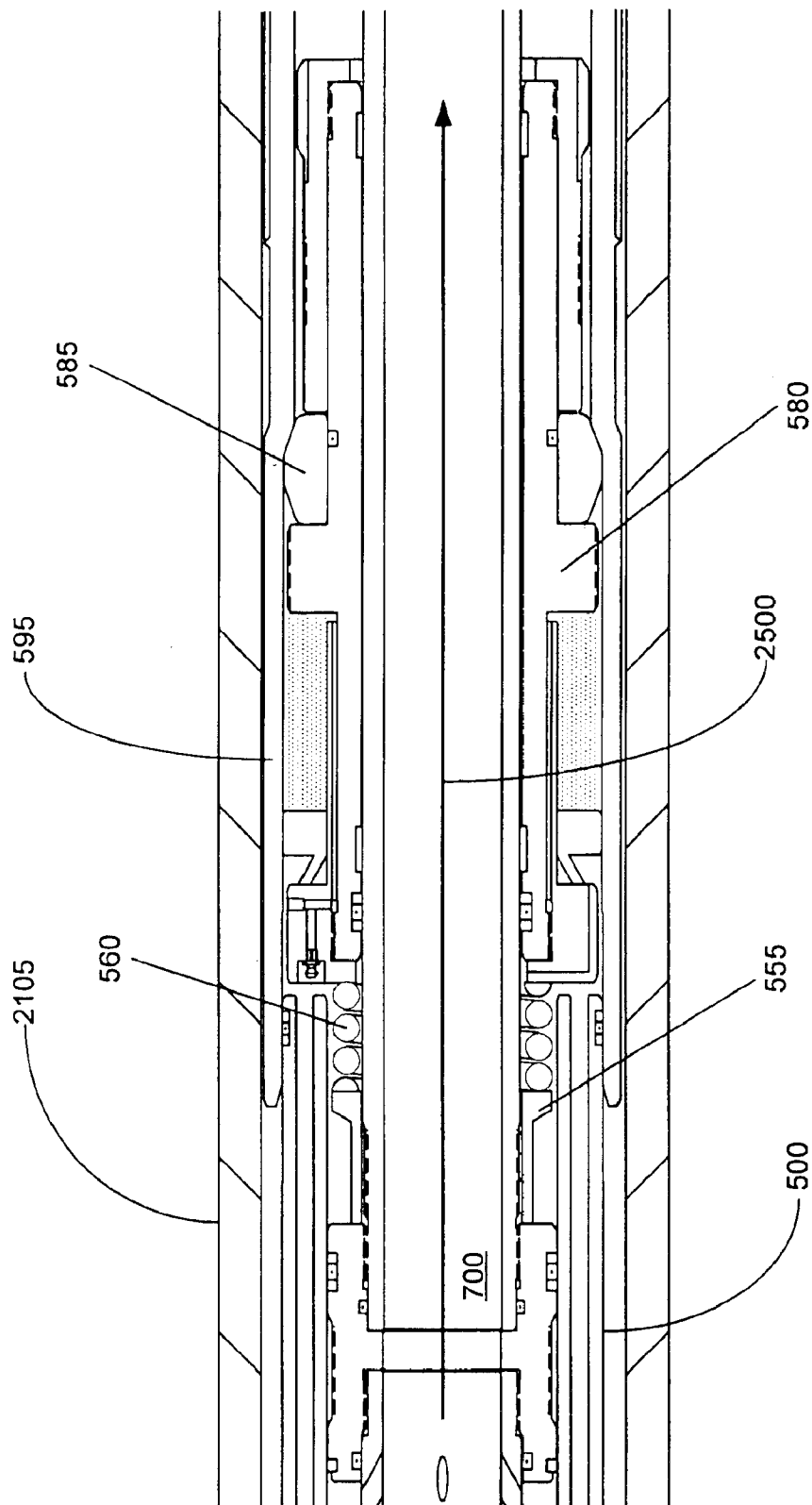
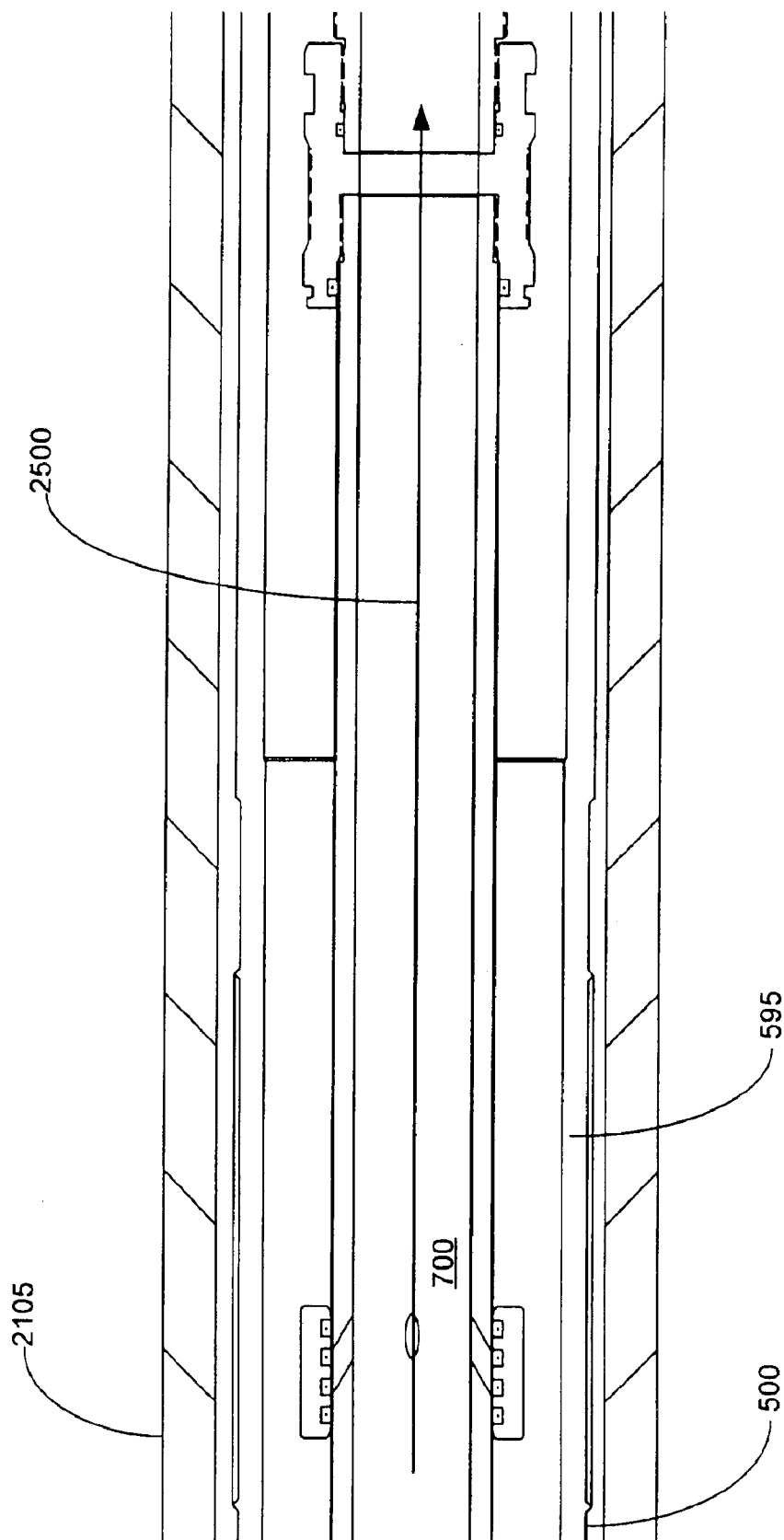


FIGURE 7C



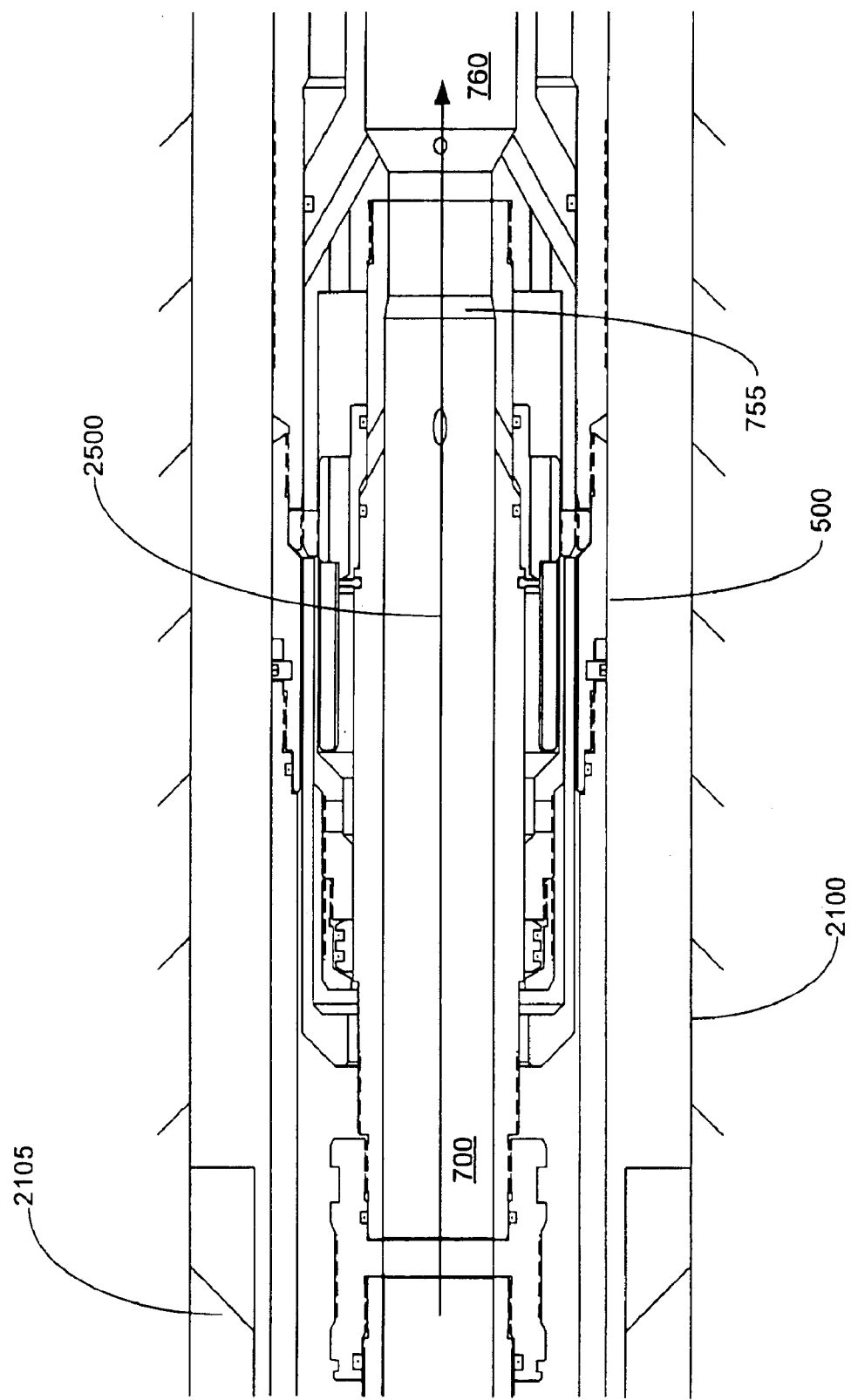


FIGURE 7E

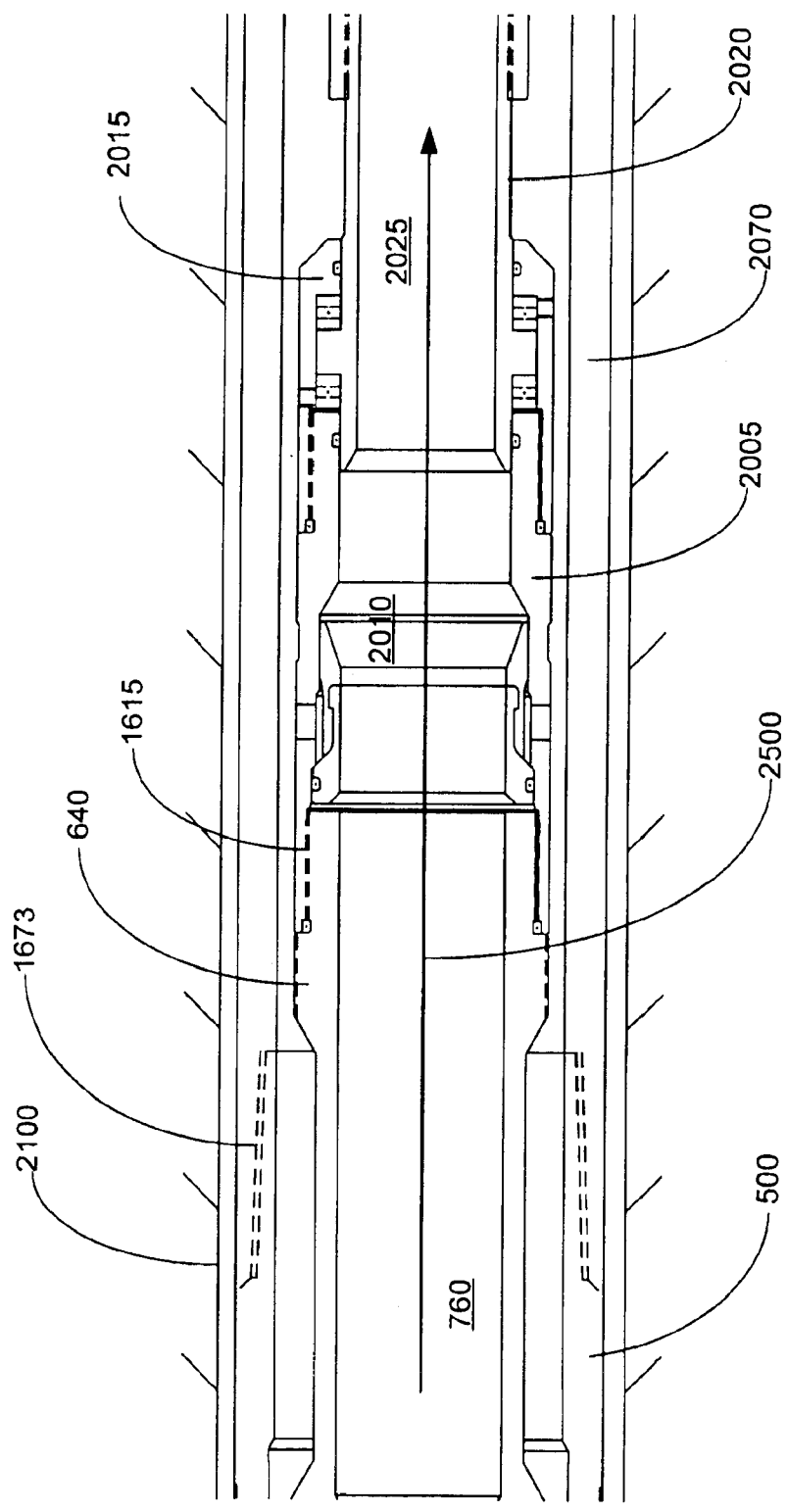


FIGURE 7F

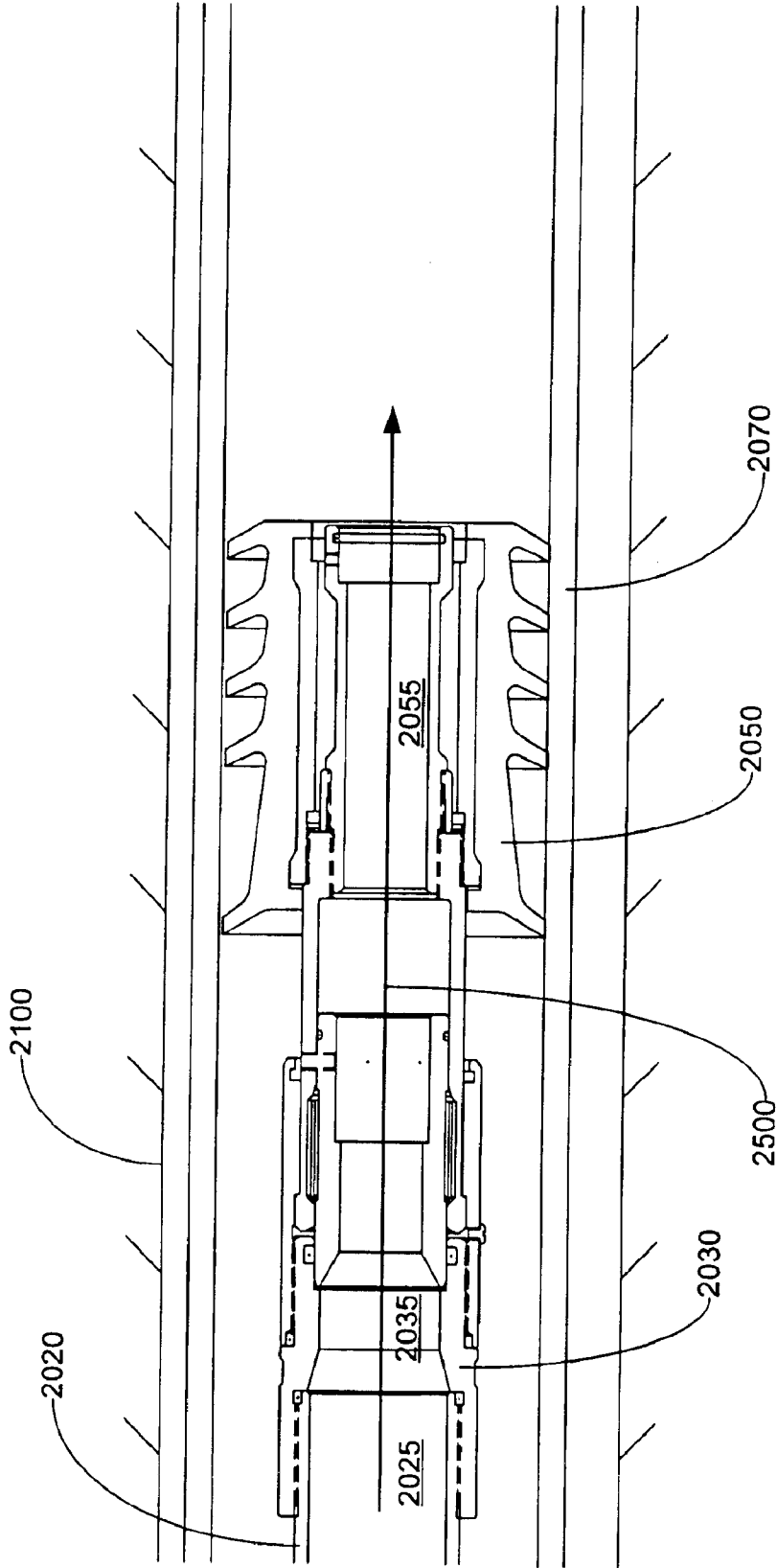


FIGURE 7G

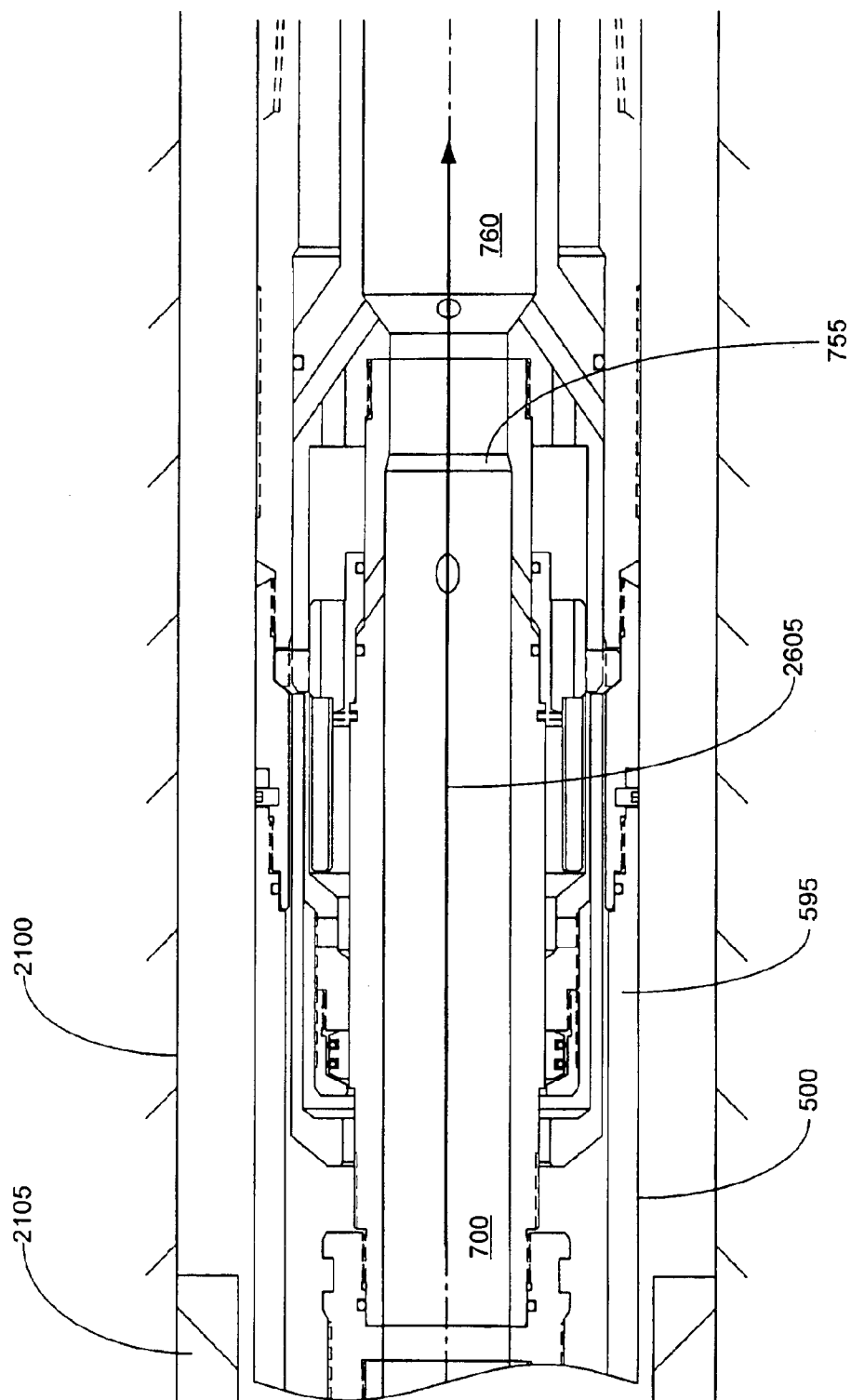


FIGURE 8A

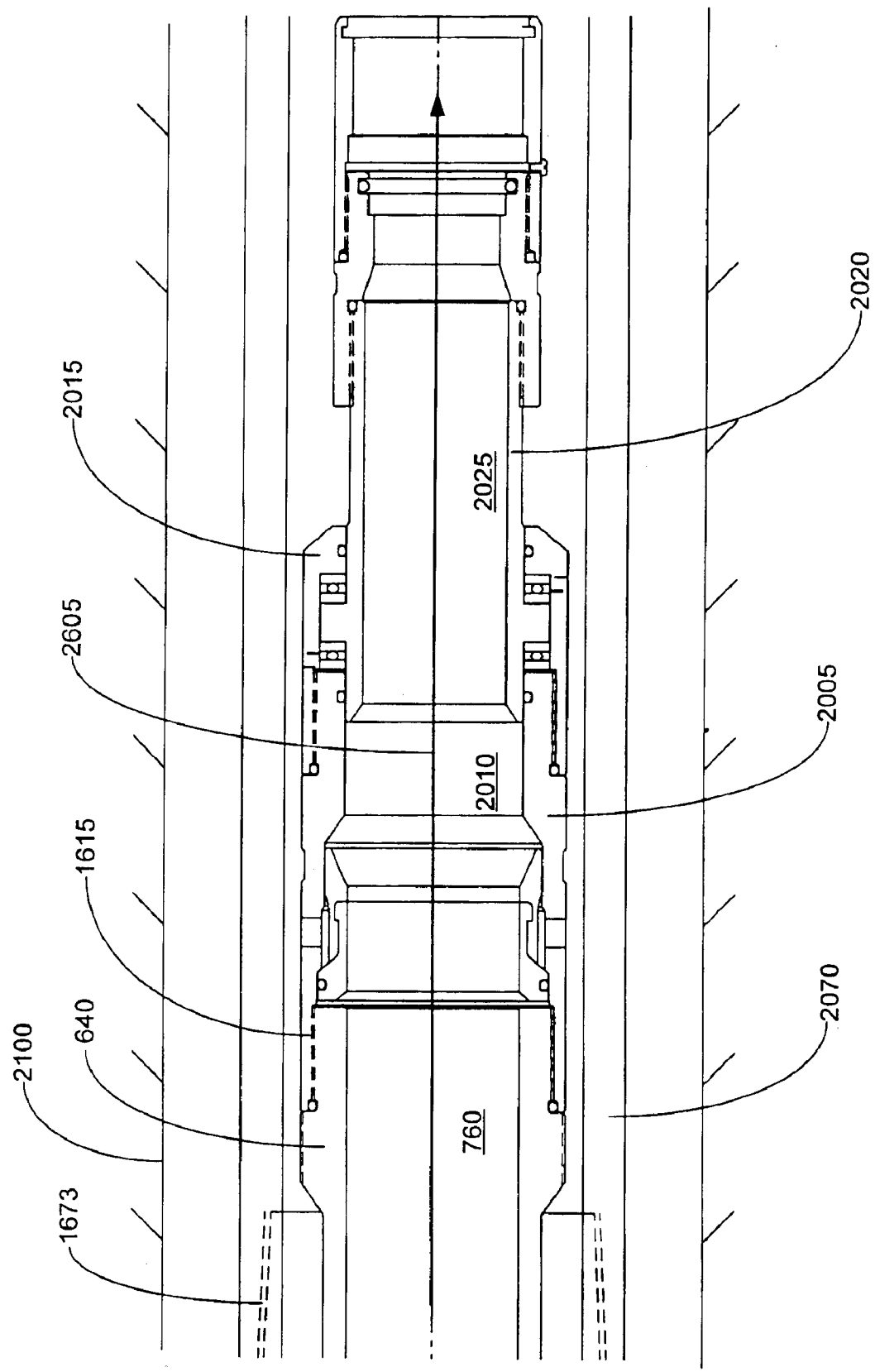
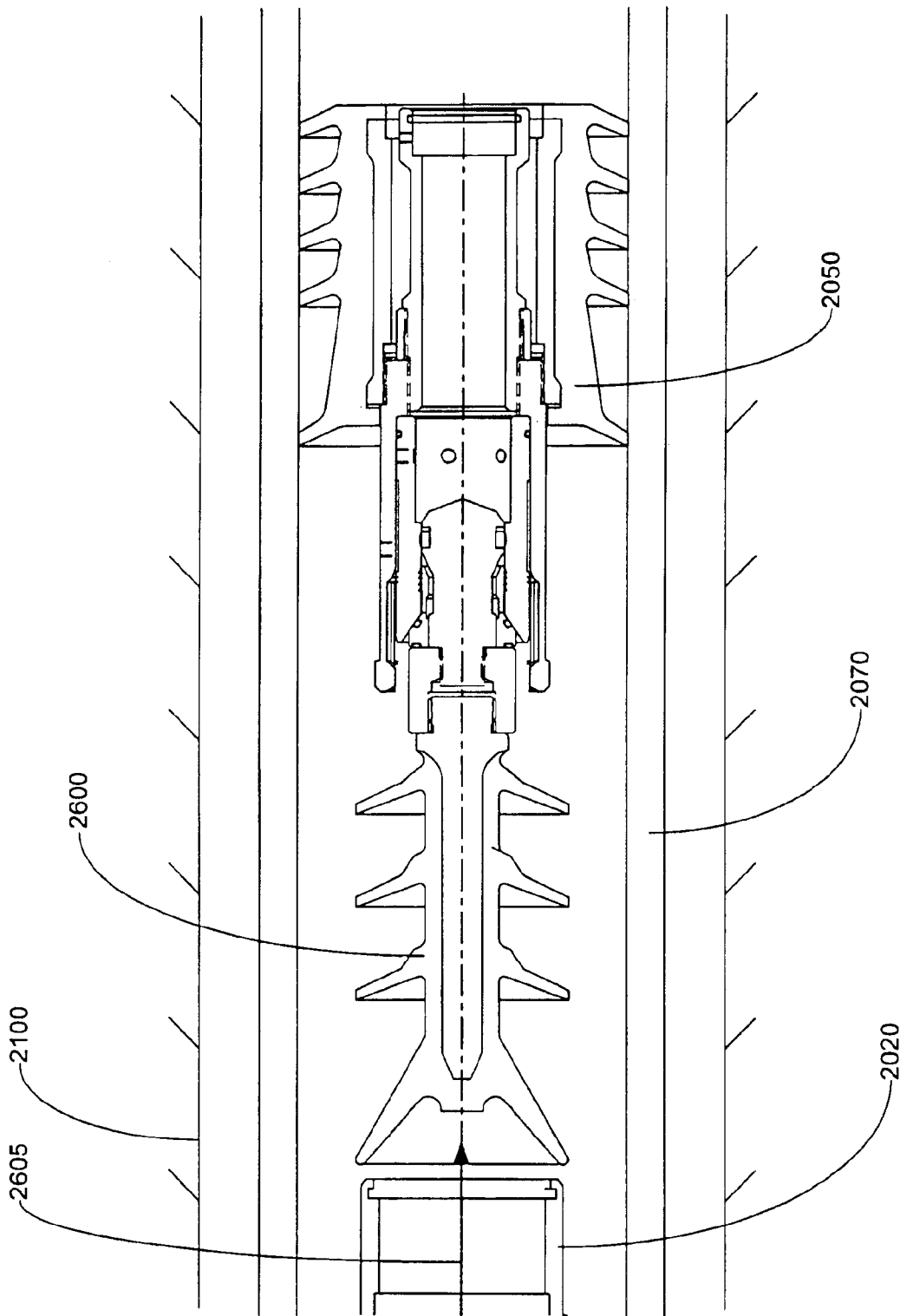


FIGURE 8B



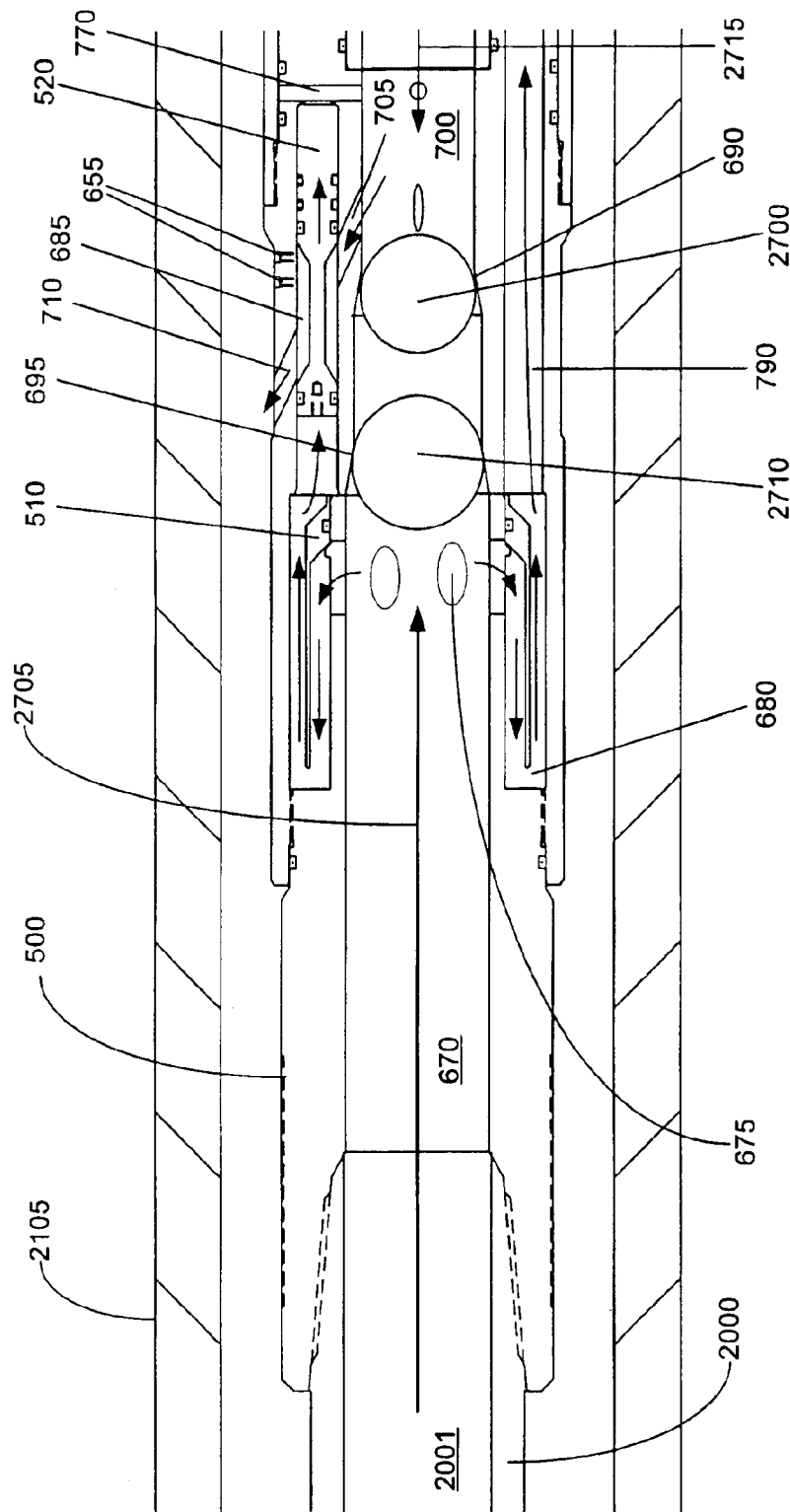


FIGURE 9A

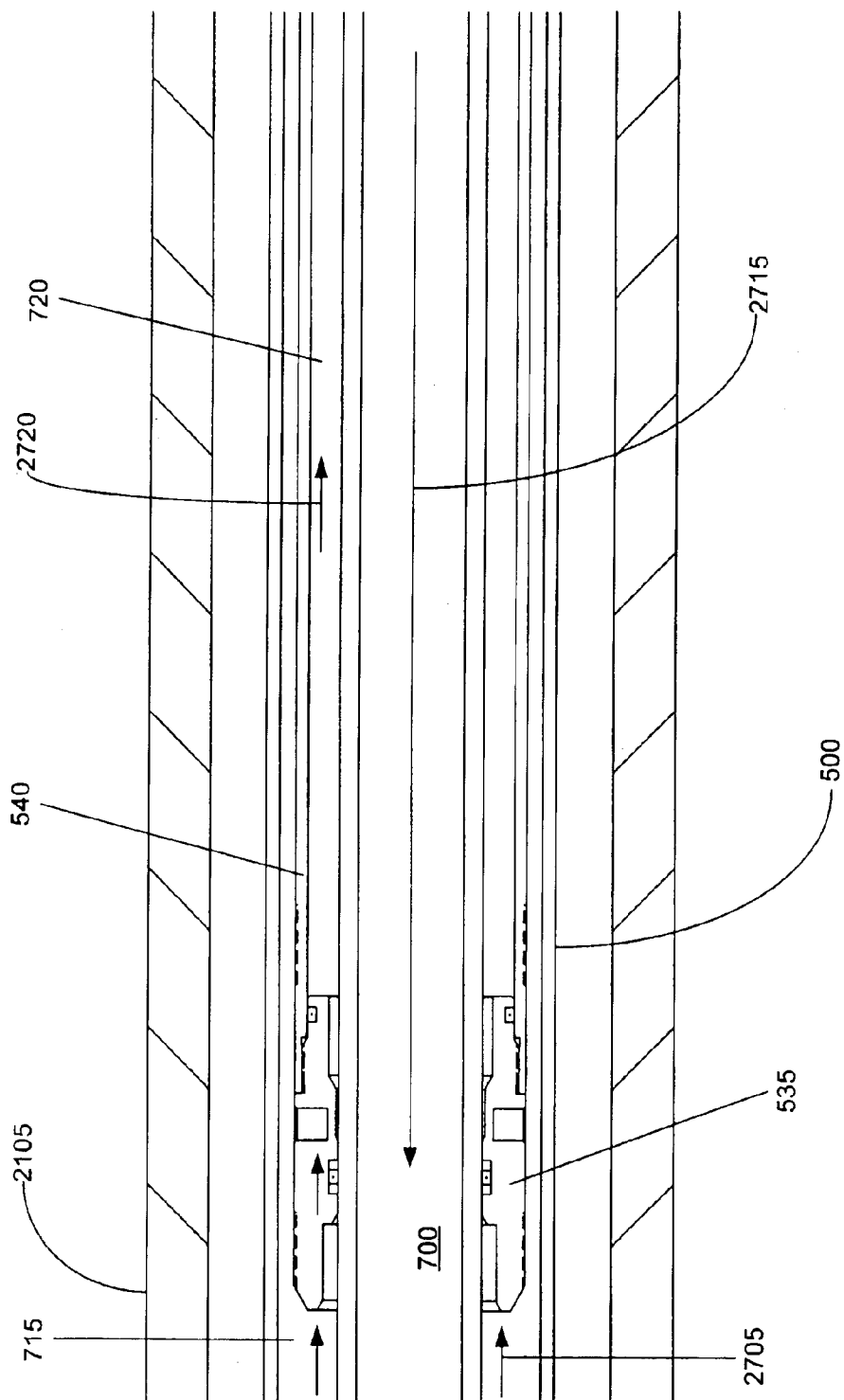


FIGURE 9B

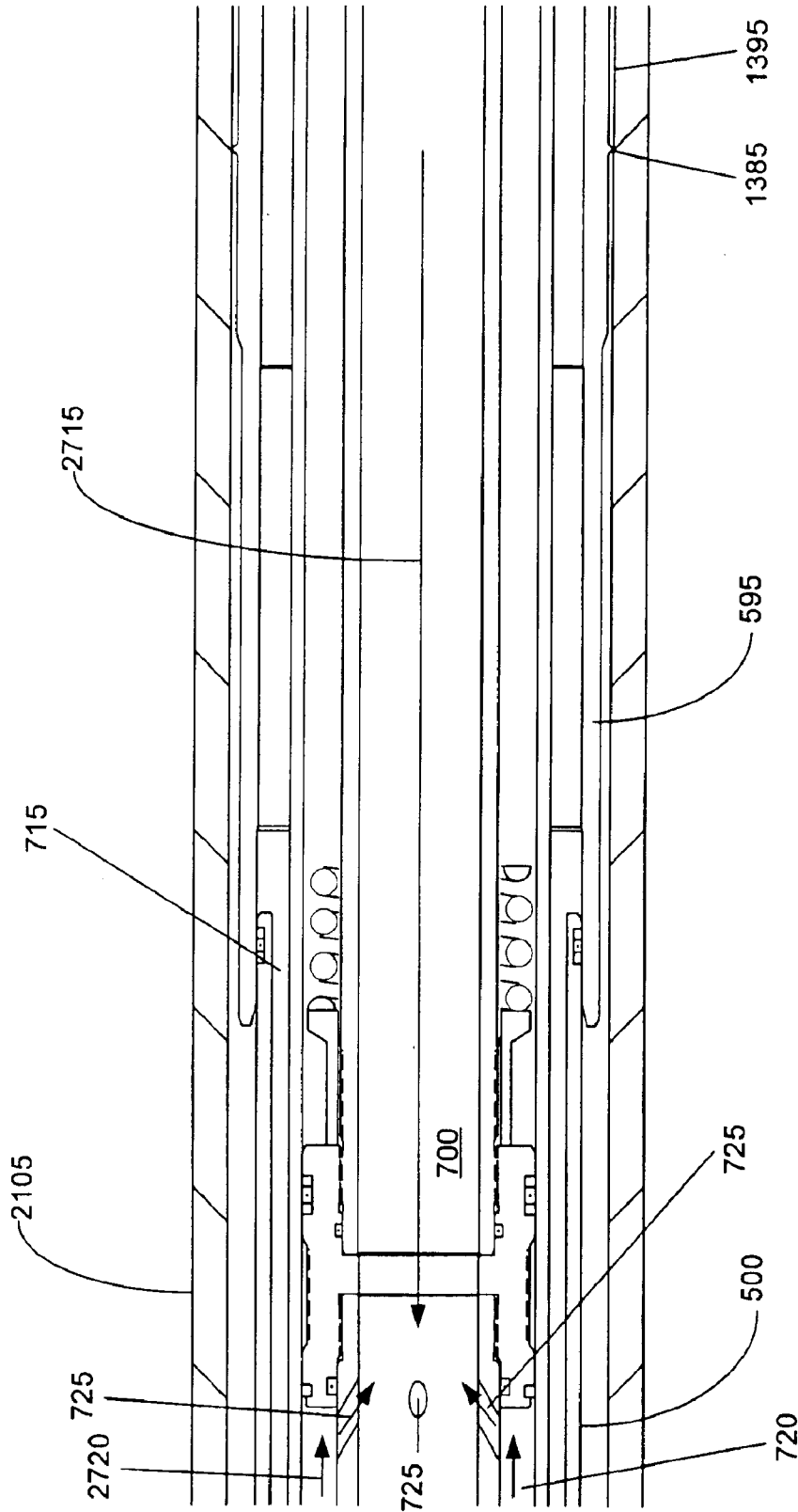


FIGURE 9C

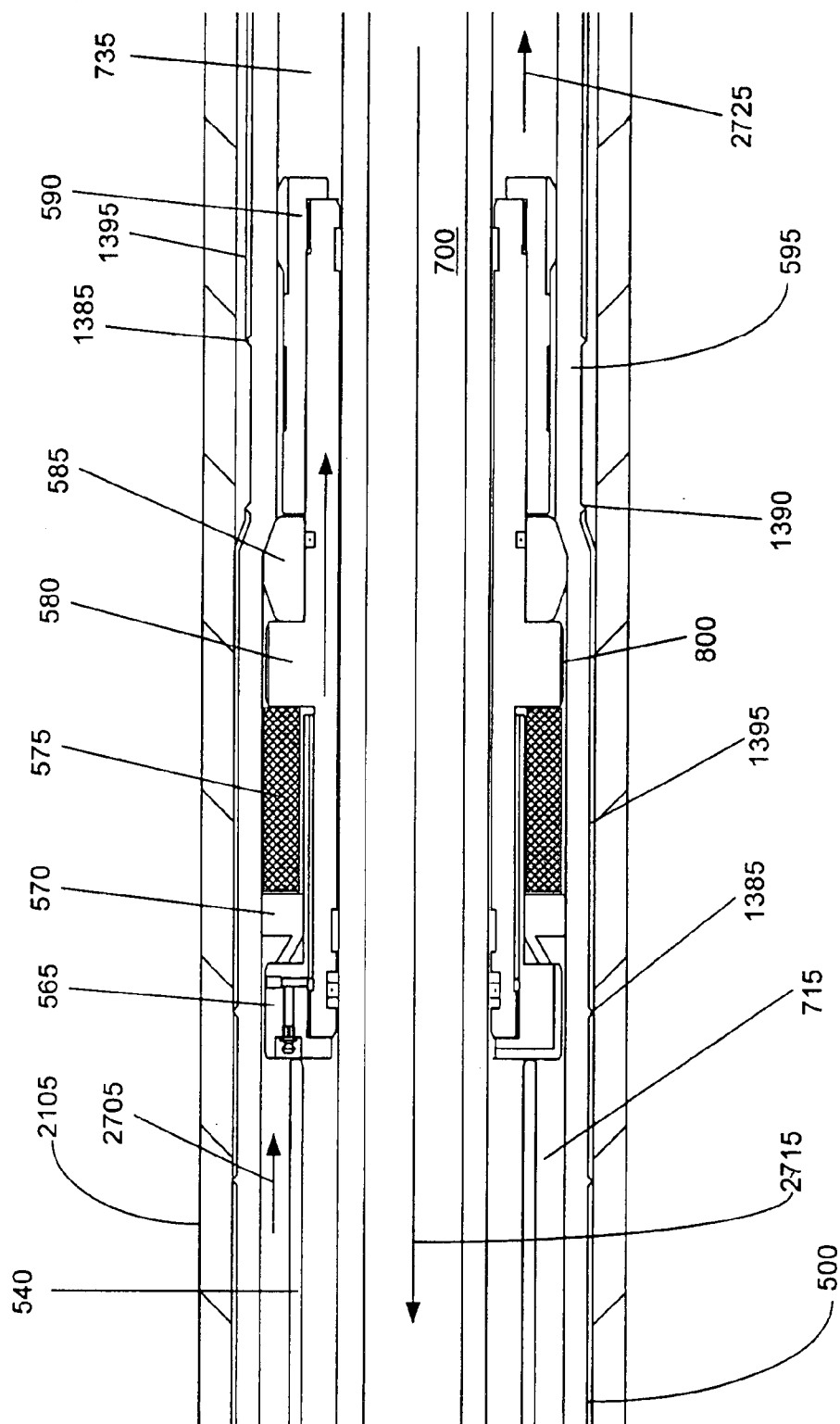


FIGURE 9D

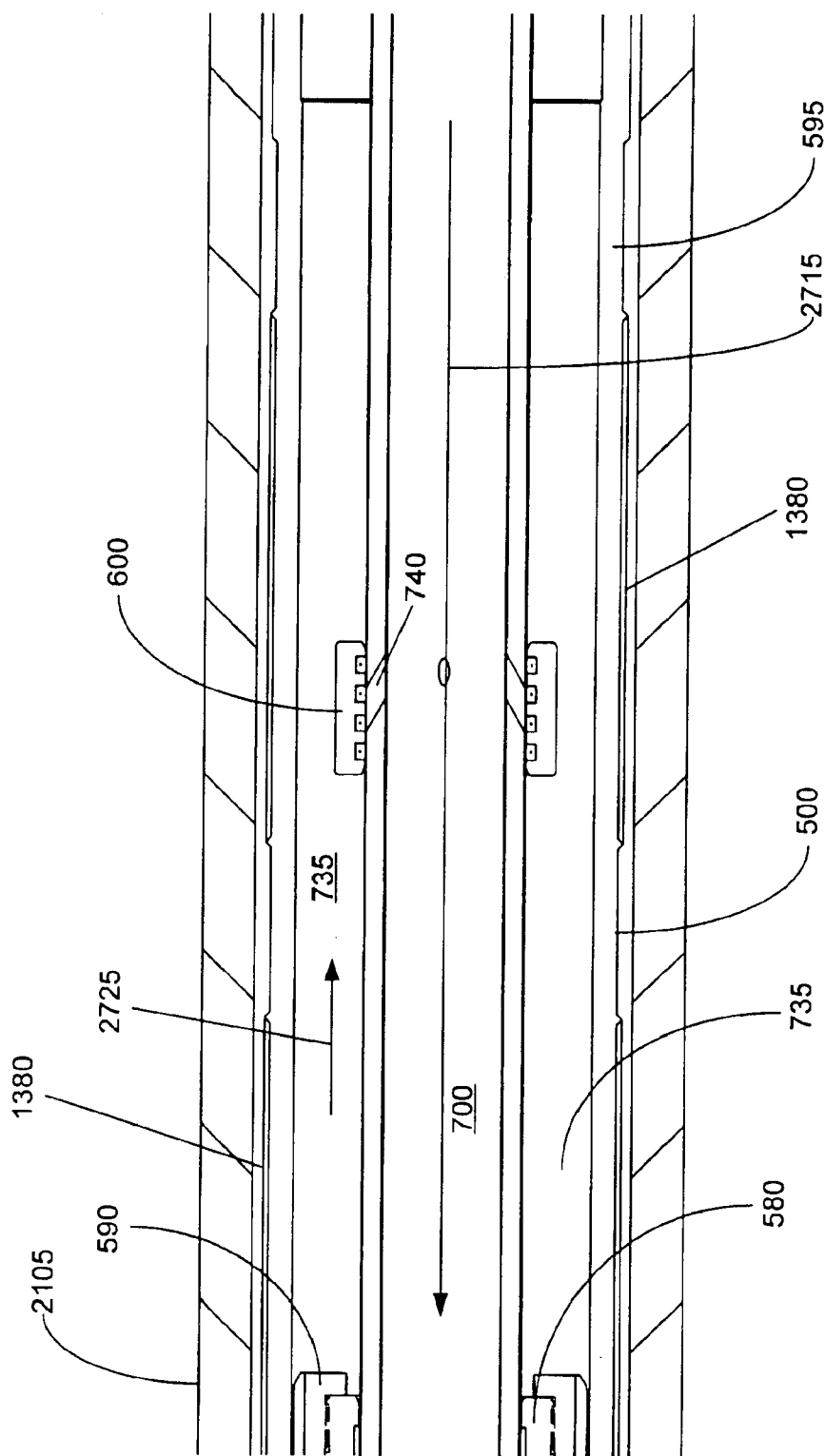


FIGURE 9E

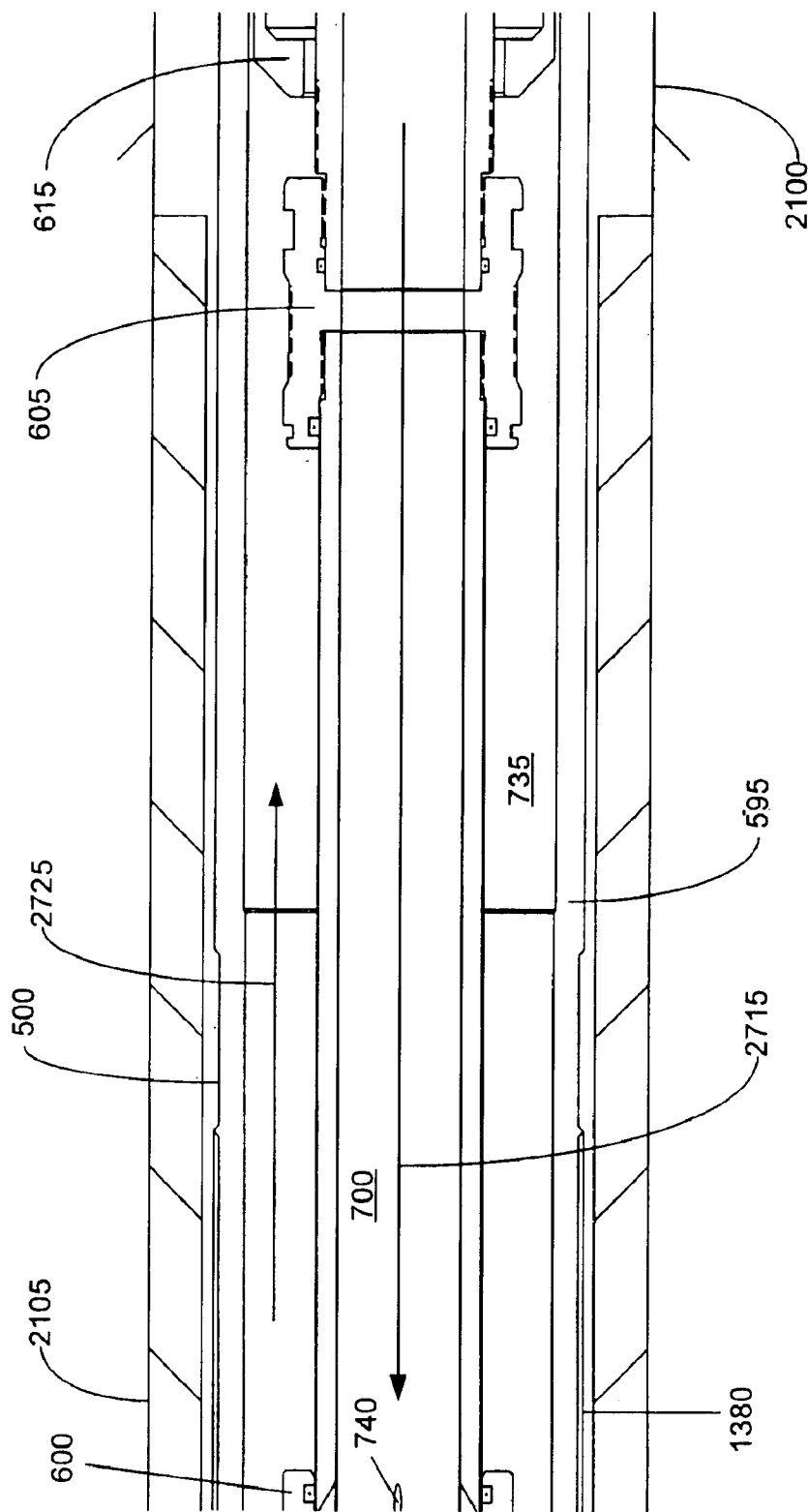


FIGURE 9F

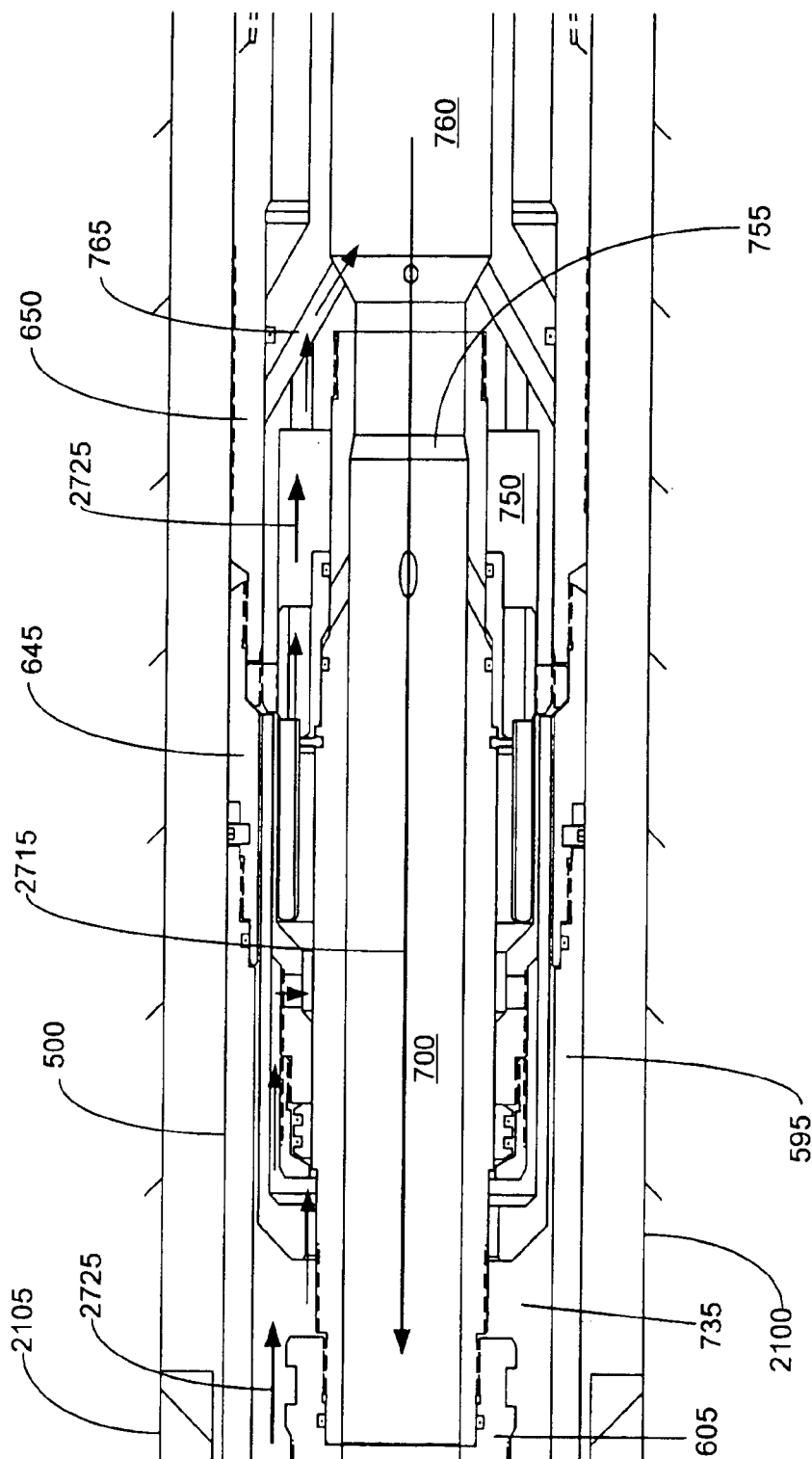


FIGURE 9G

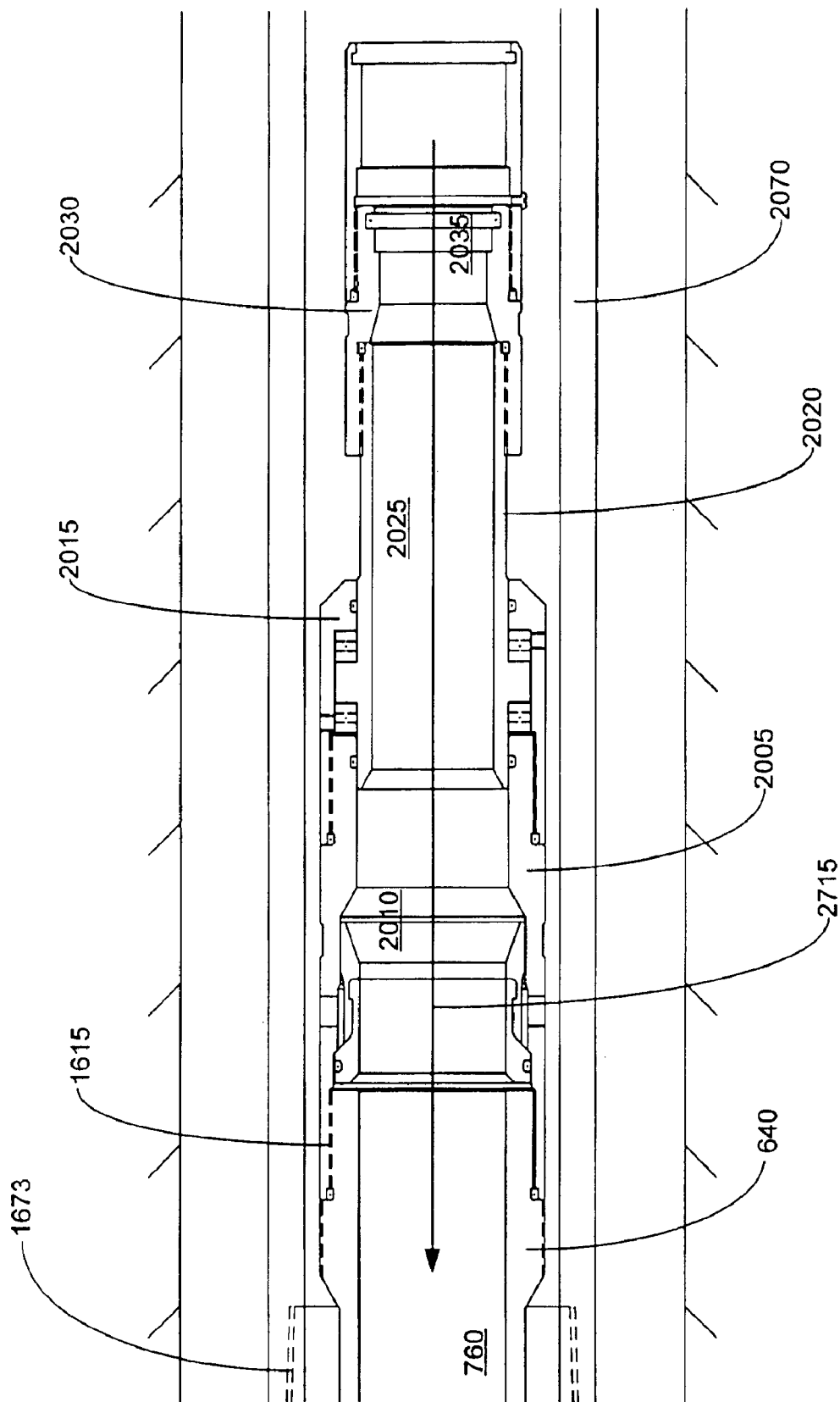


FIGURE 9H

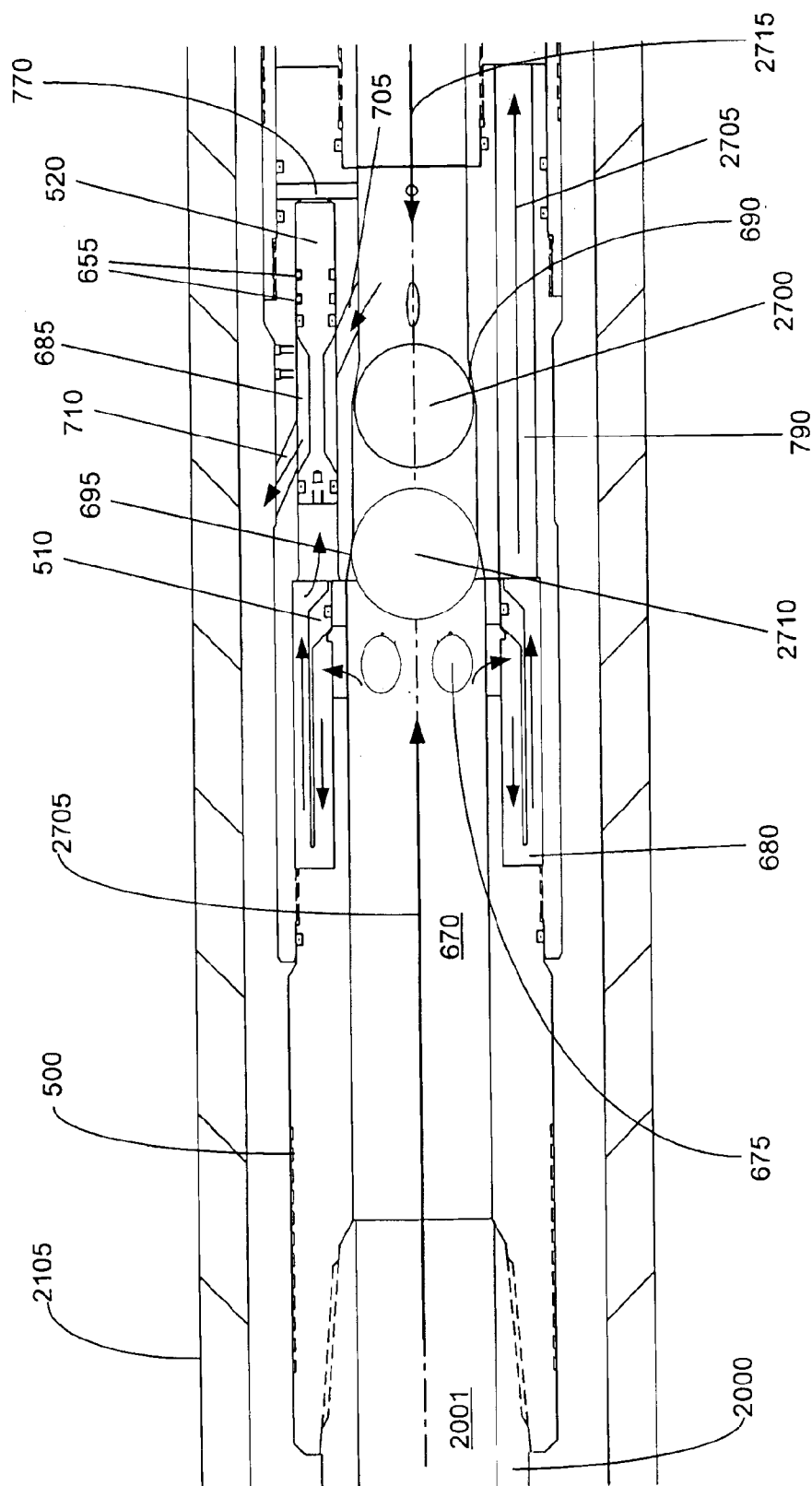


FIGURE 10A

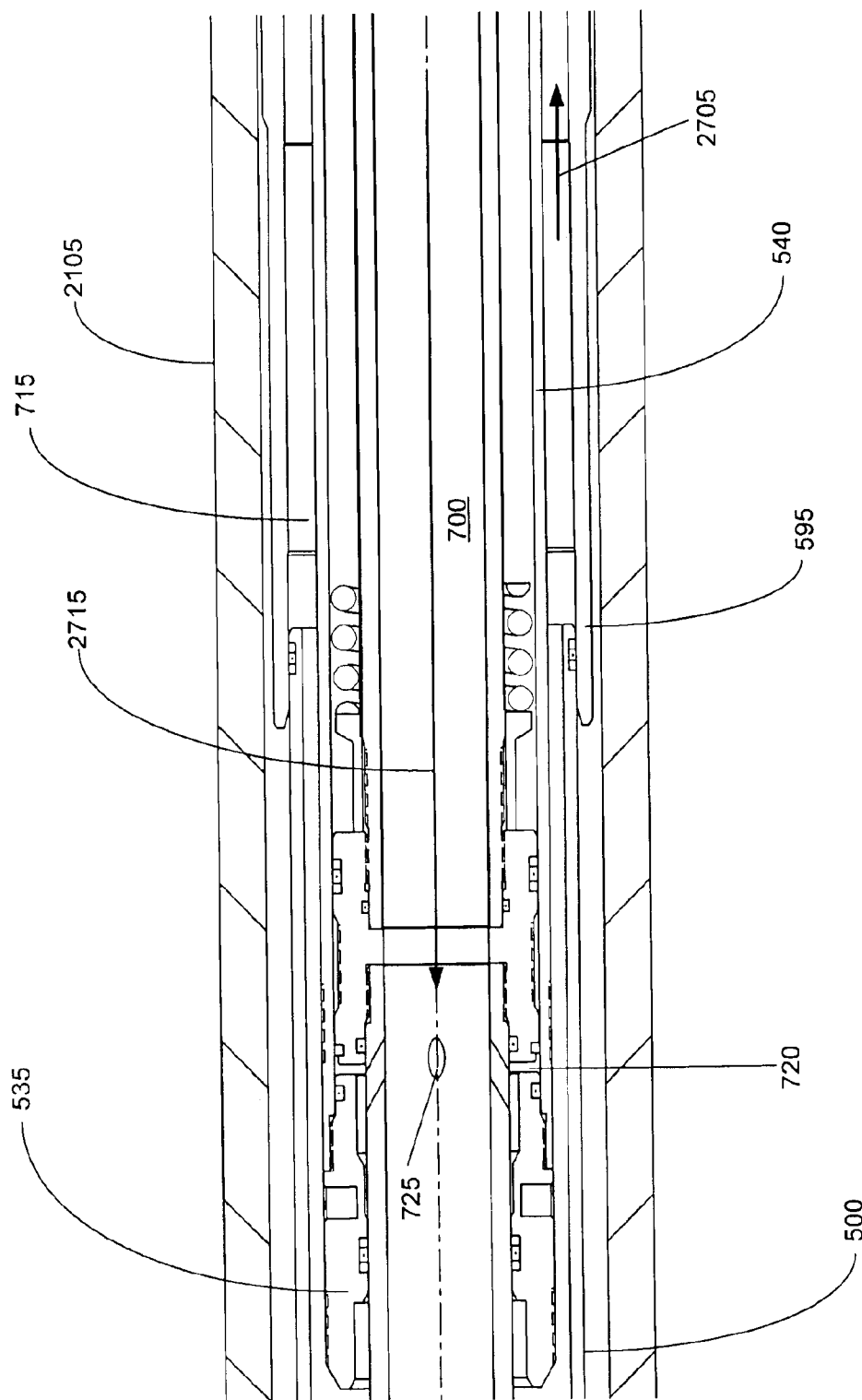


FIGURE 10B

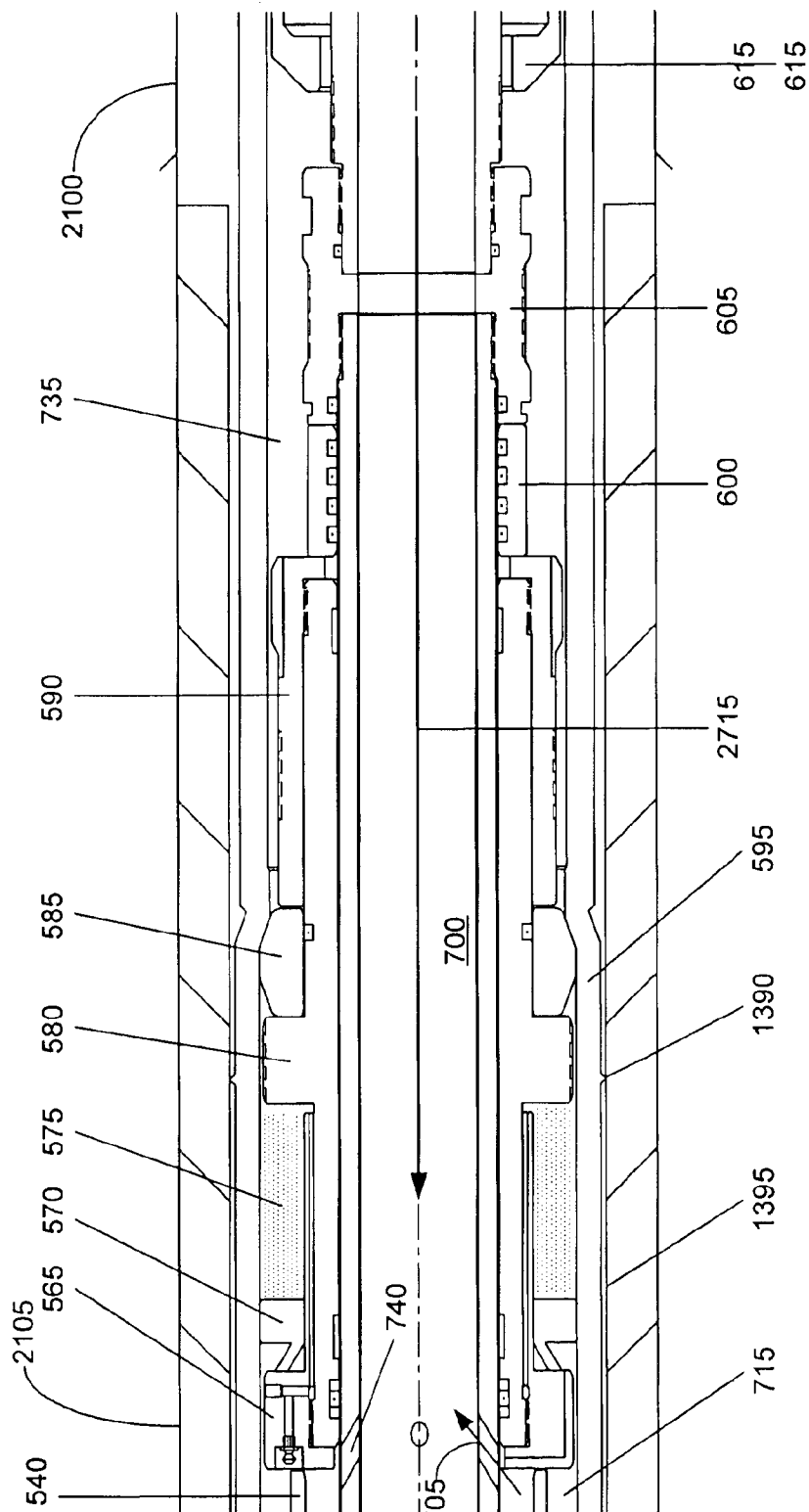


FIGURE 10C

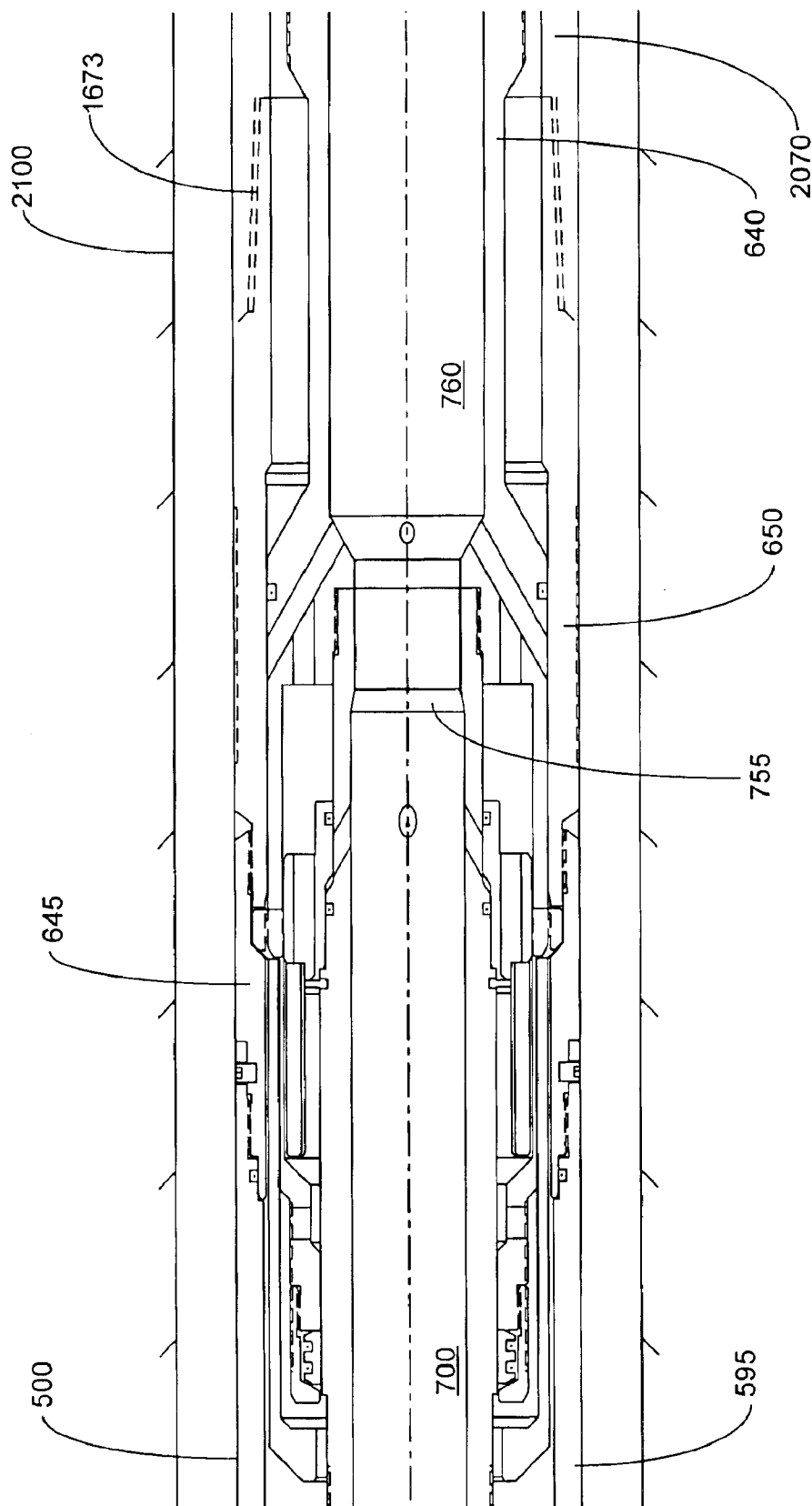


FIGURE 10D

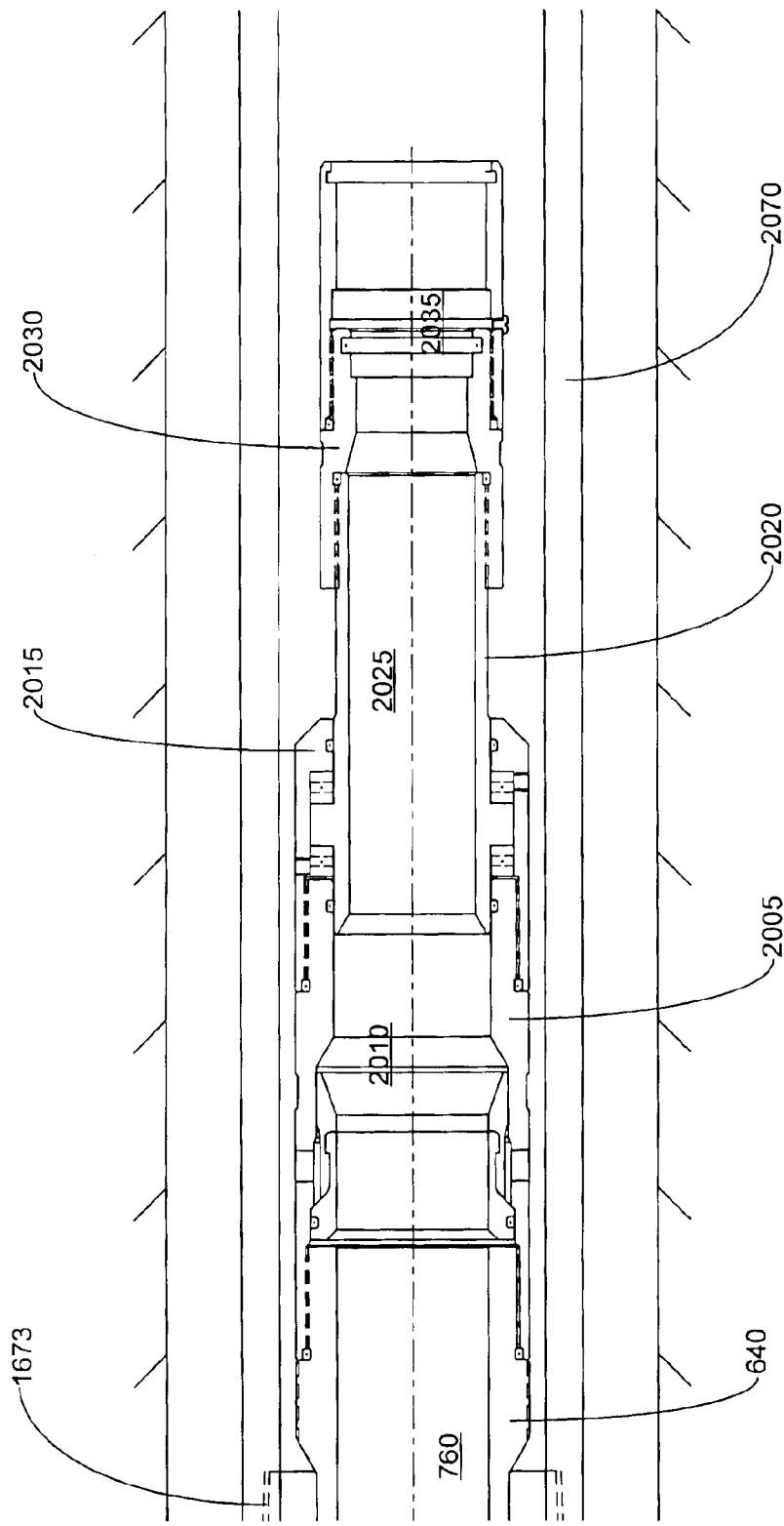


FIGURE 10E

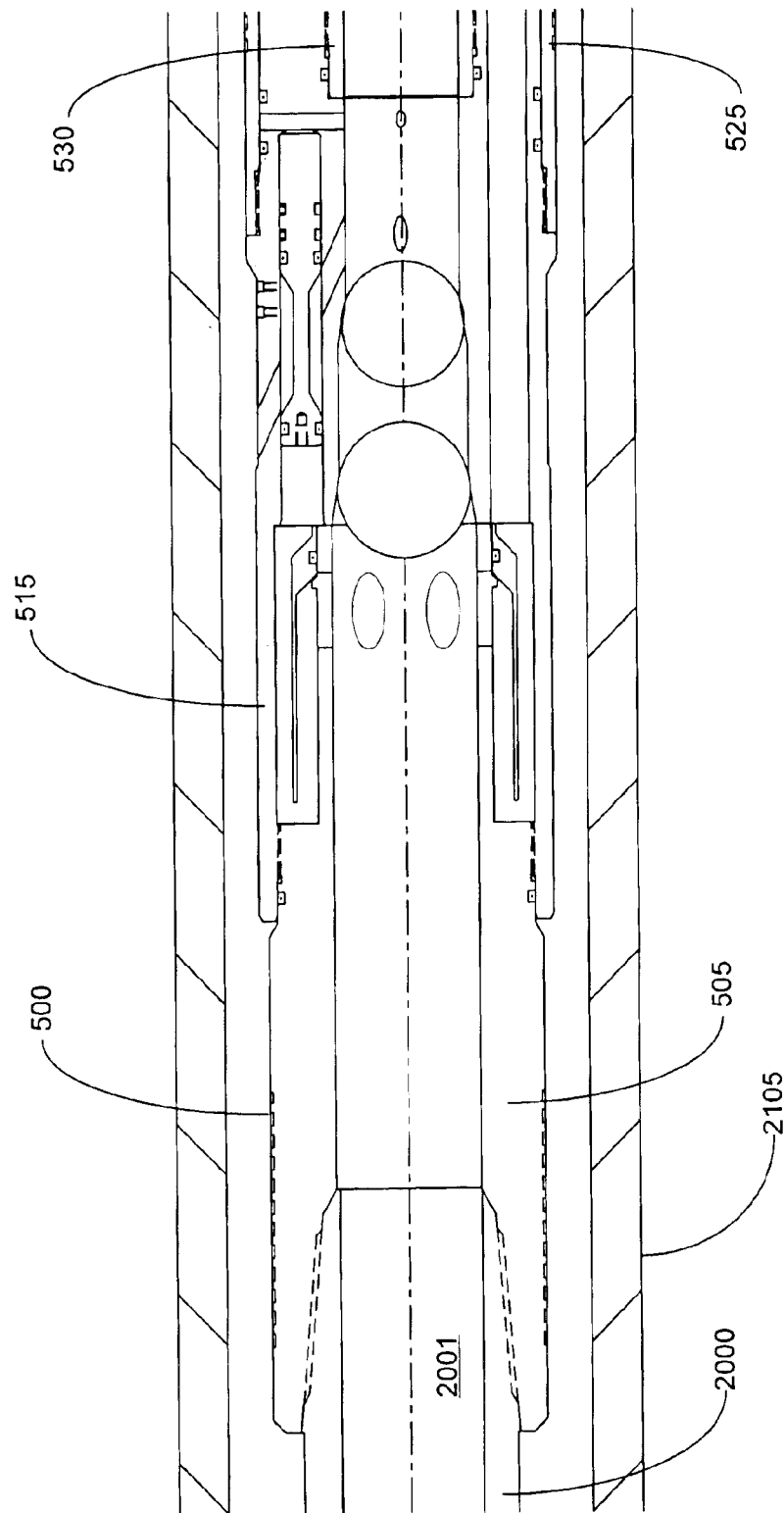
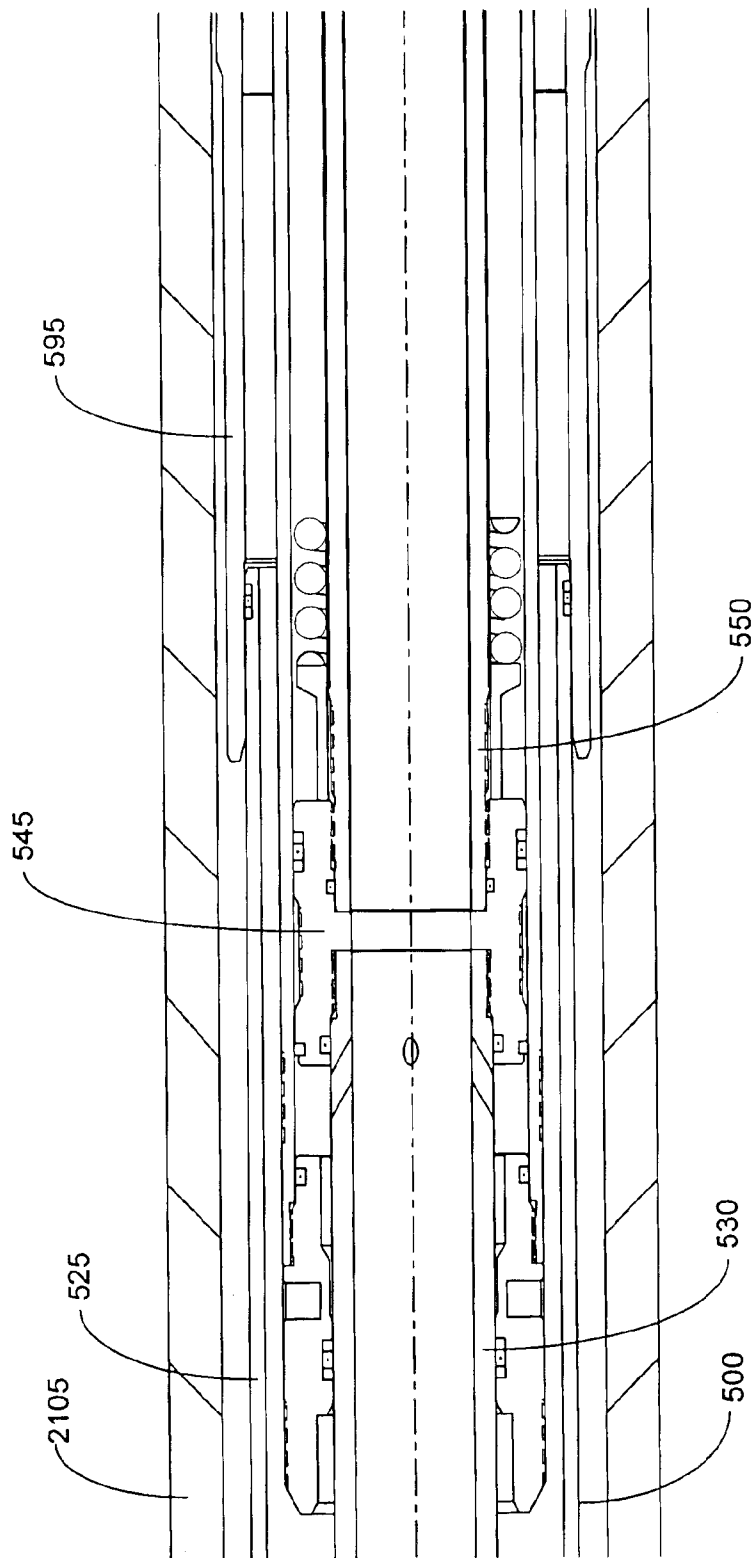


FIGURE 11A



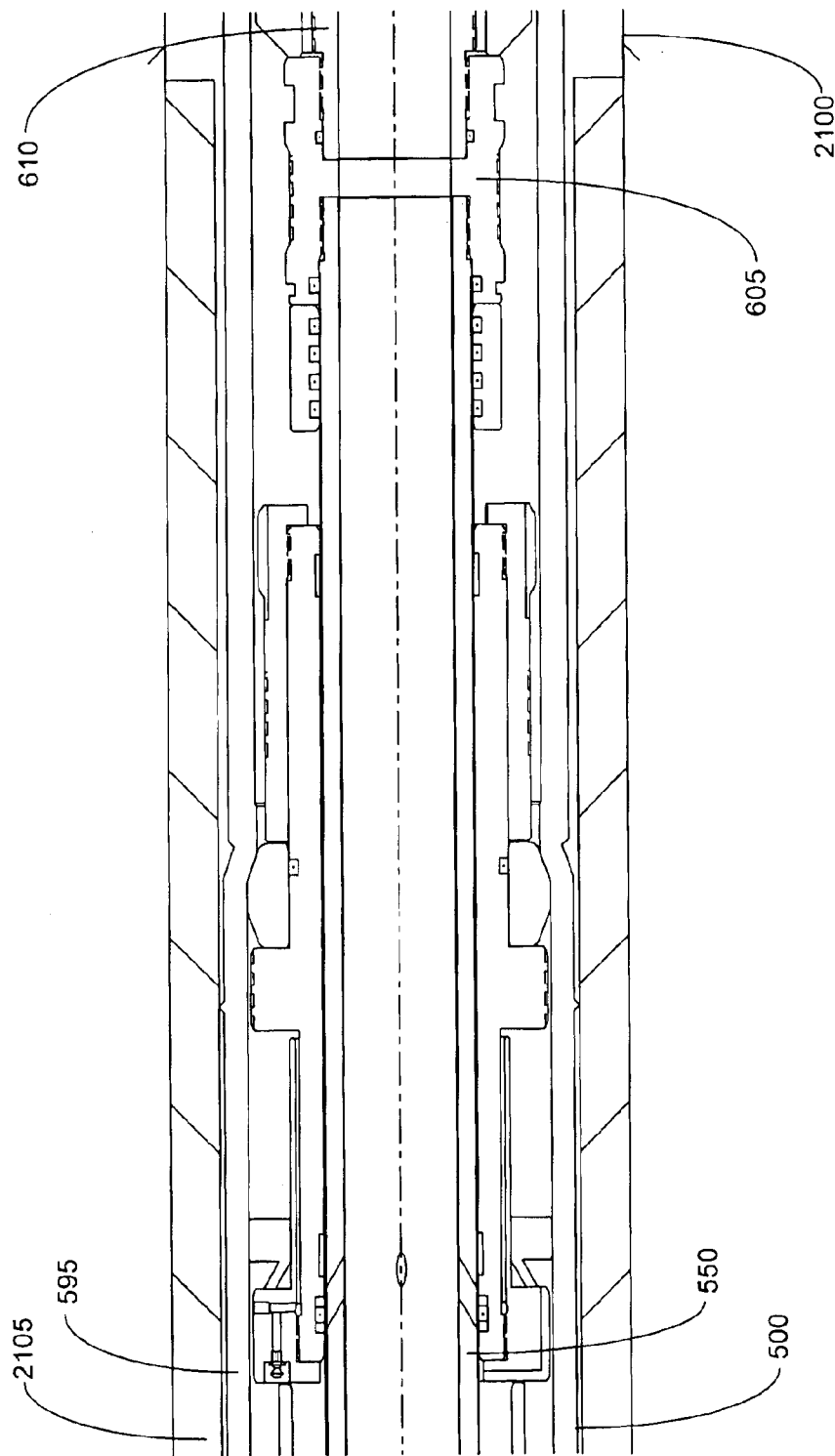


FIGURE 11C

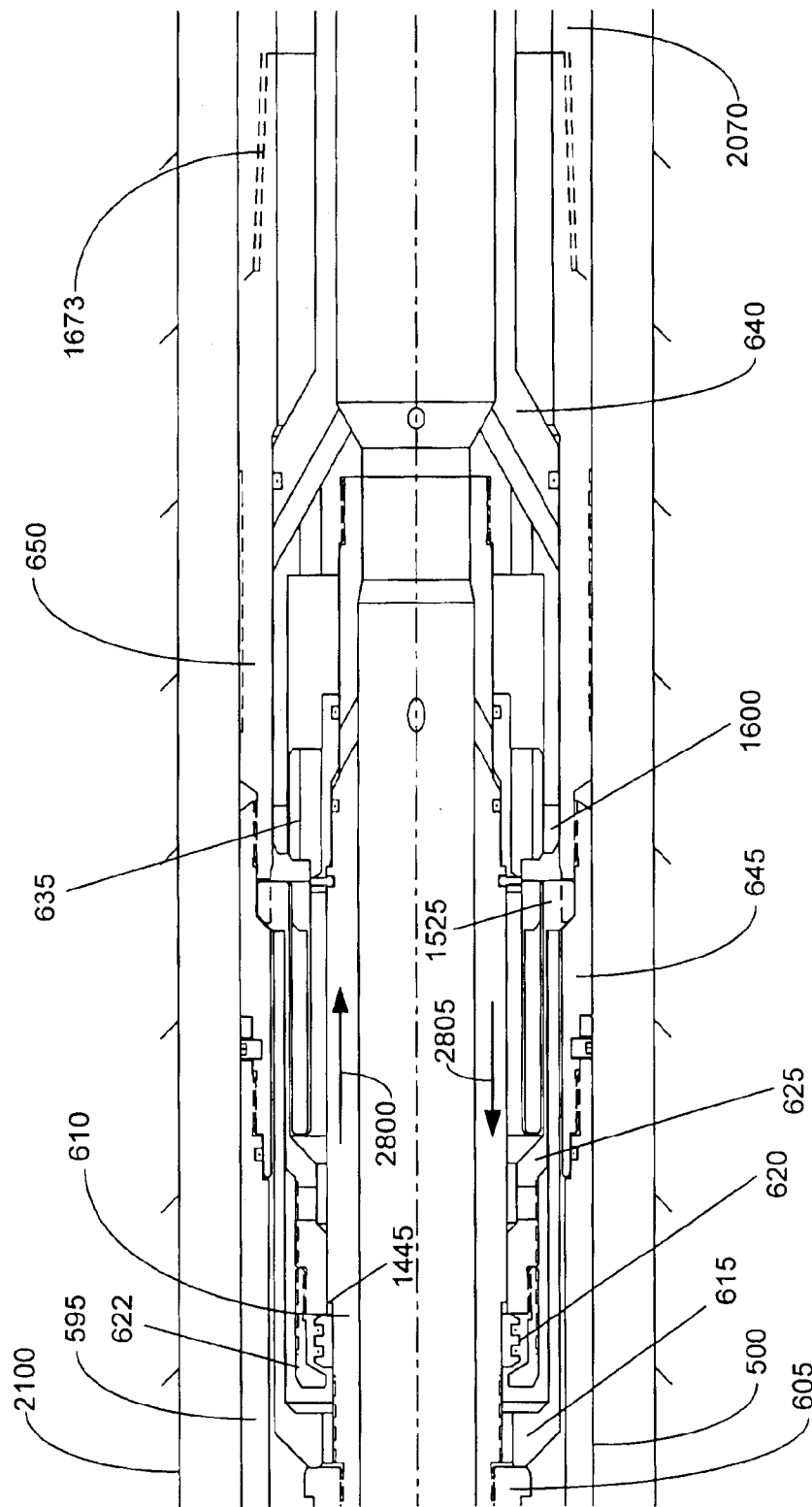


FIGURE 11D

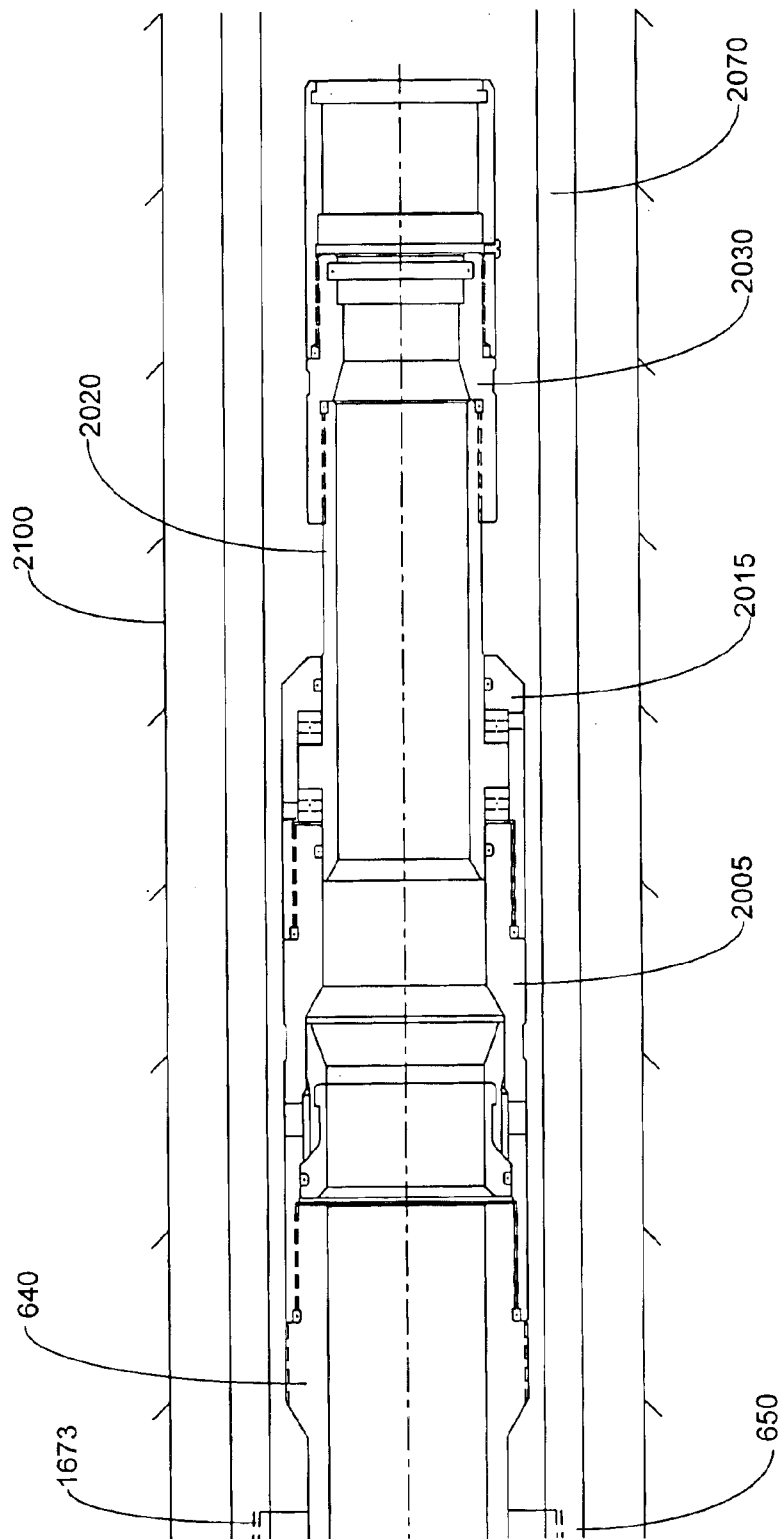


FIGURE 11E

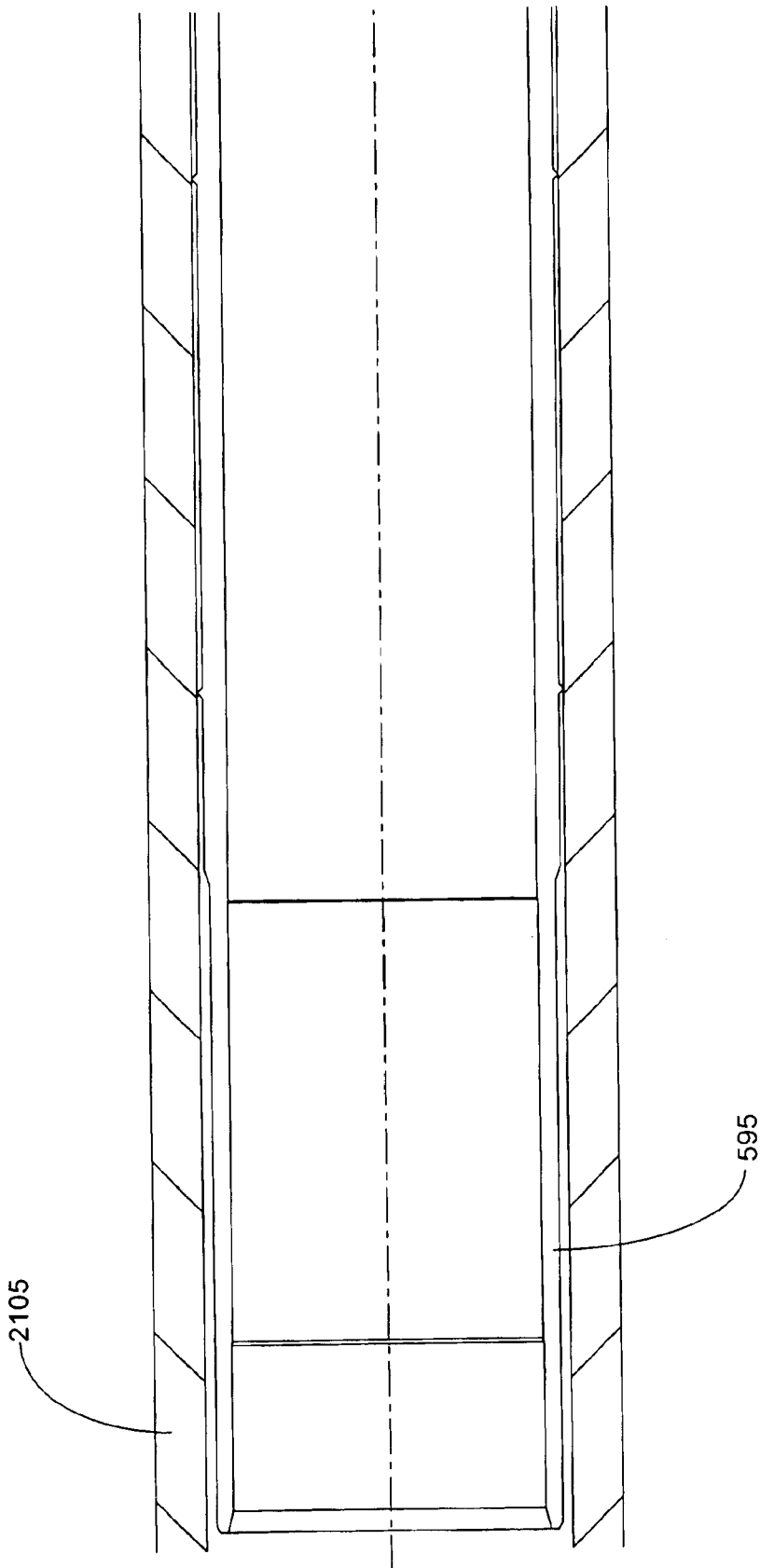


FIGURE 12A

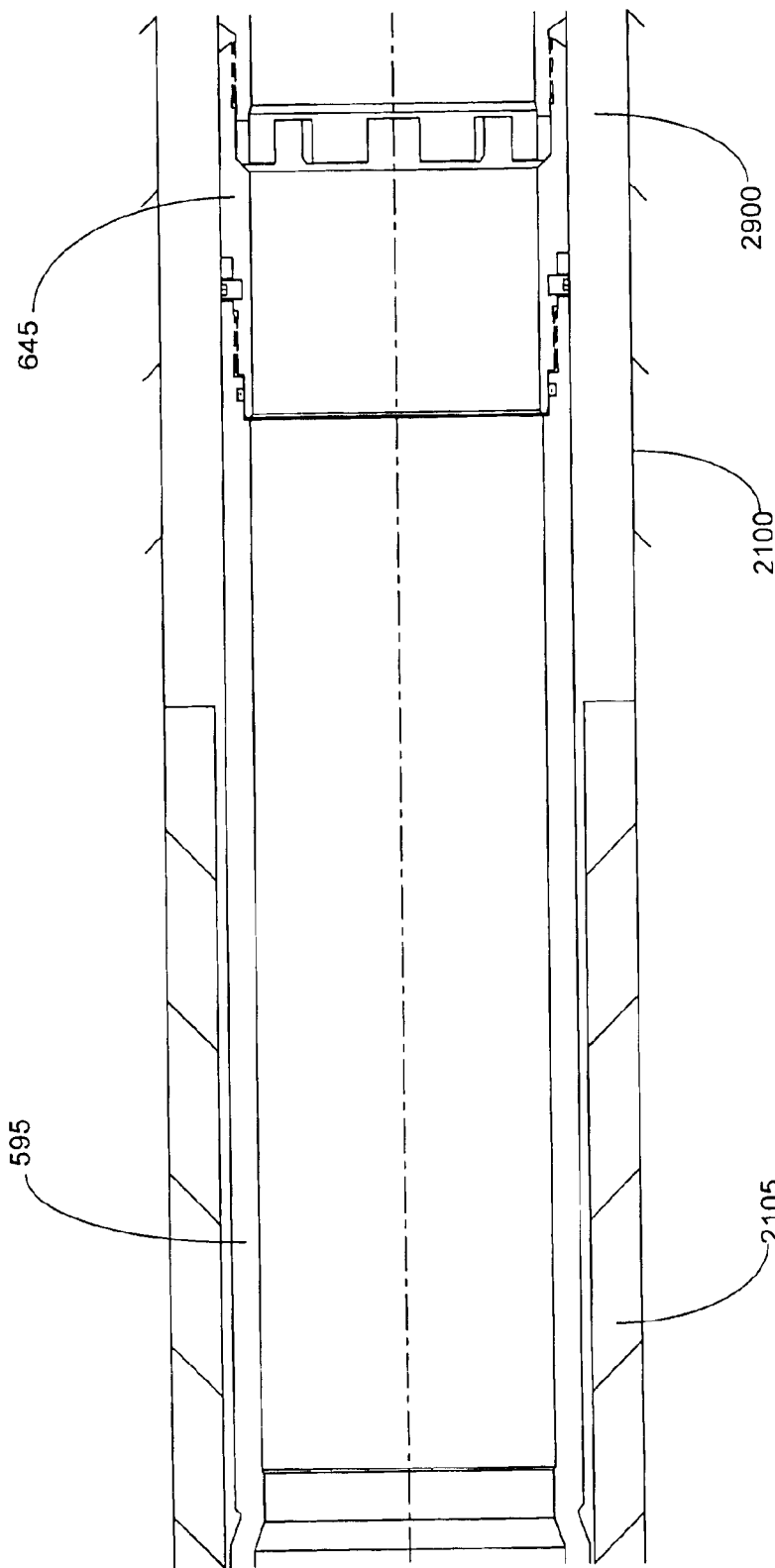


FIGURE 12B

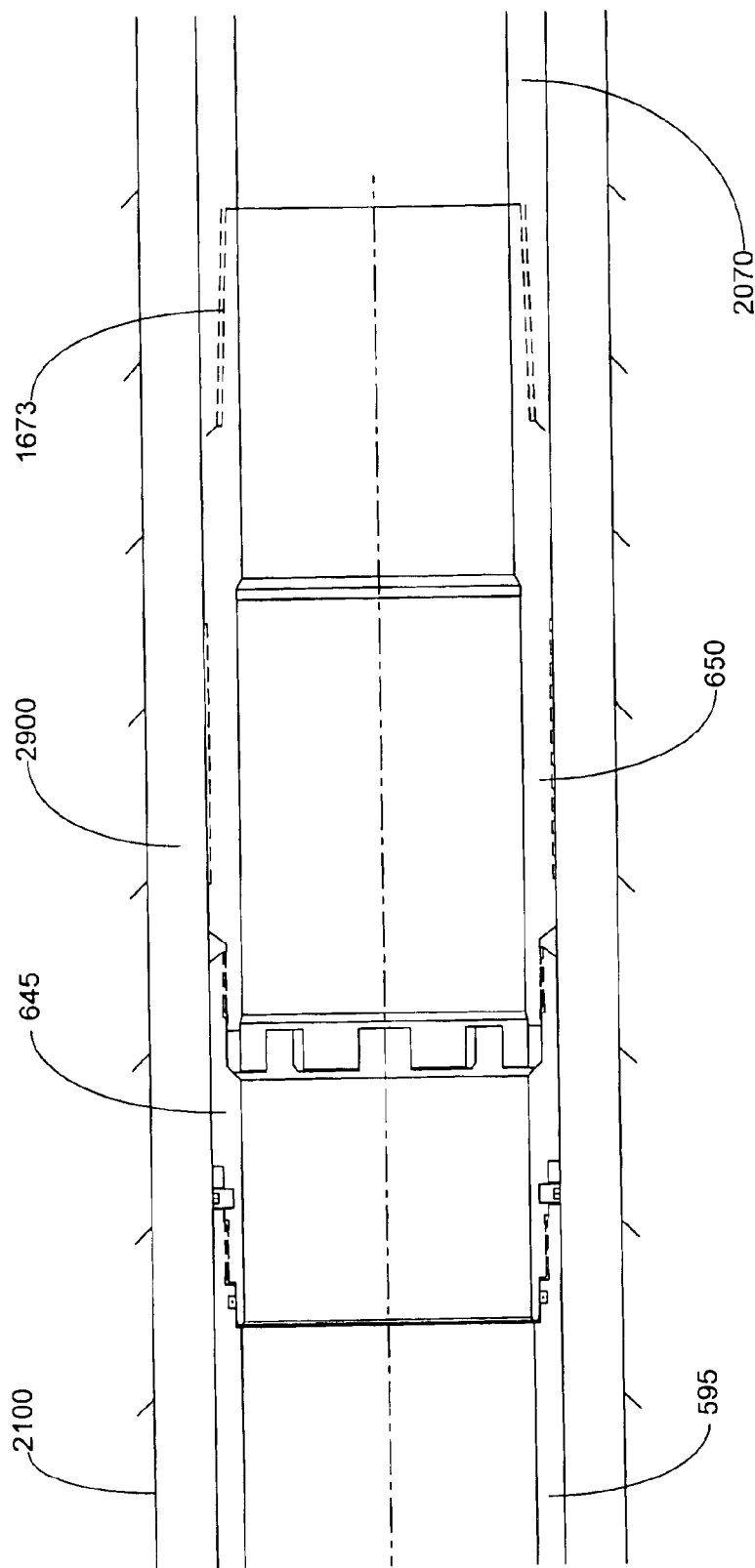


FIGURE 12C

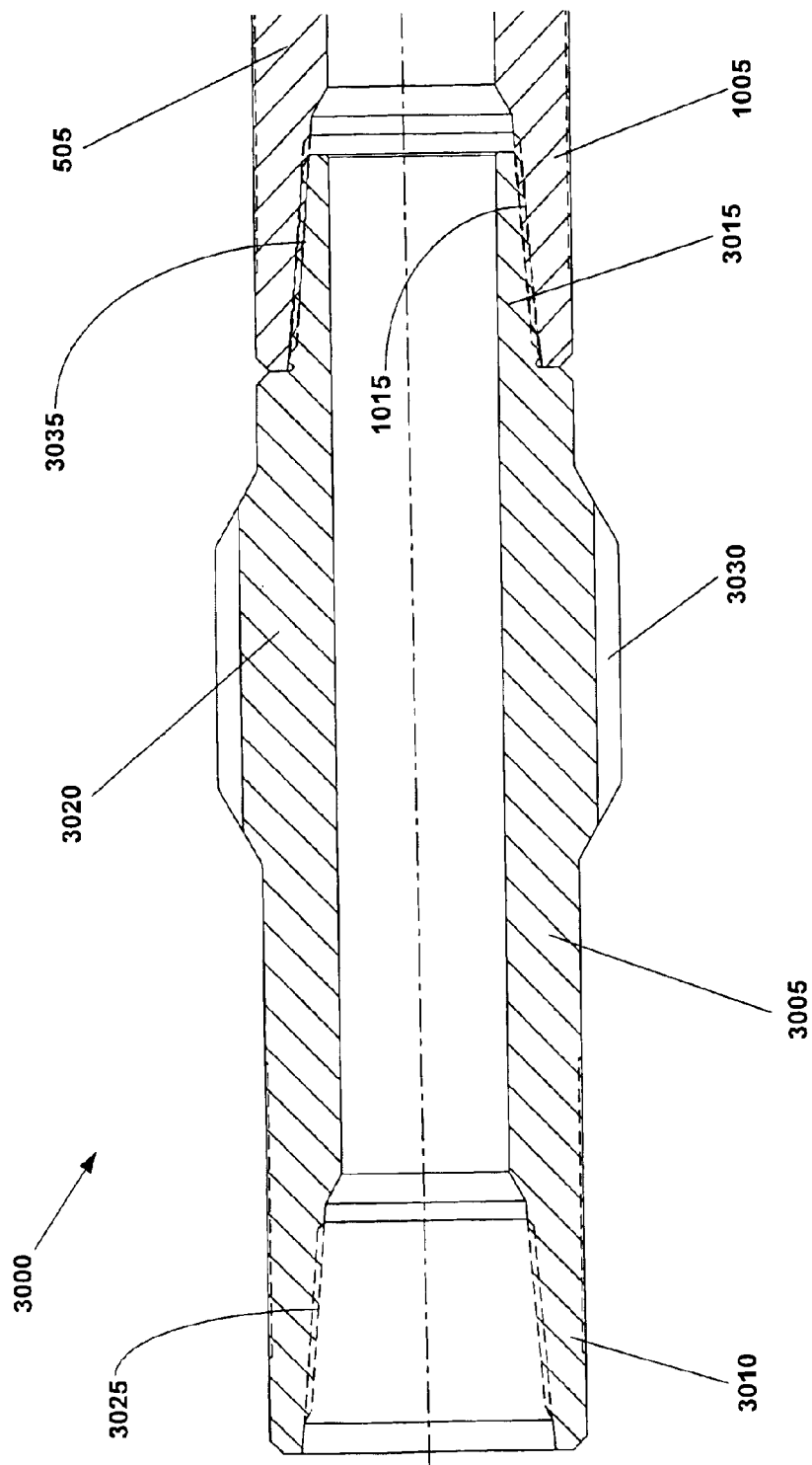


FIGURE 13A

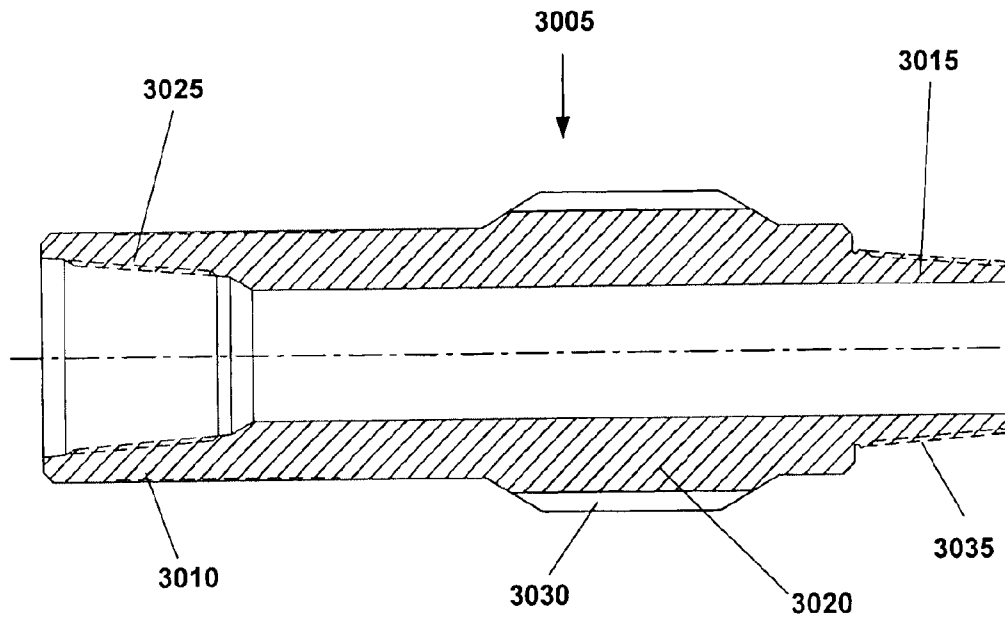


FIGURE 13B

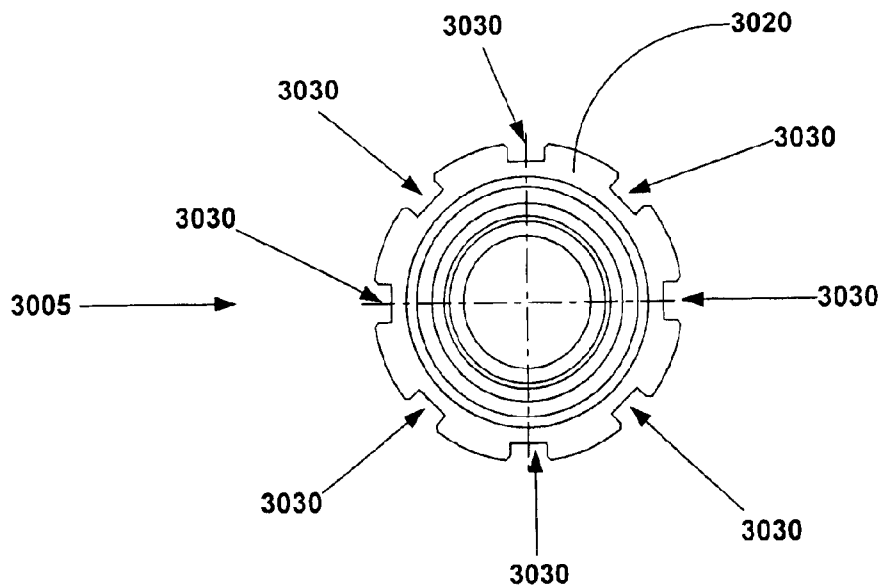


FIGURE 13C

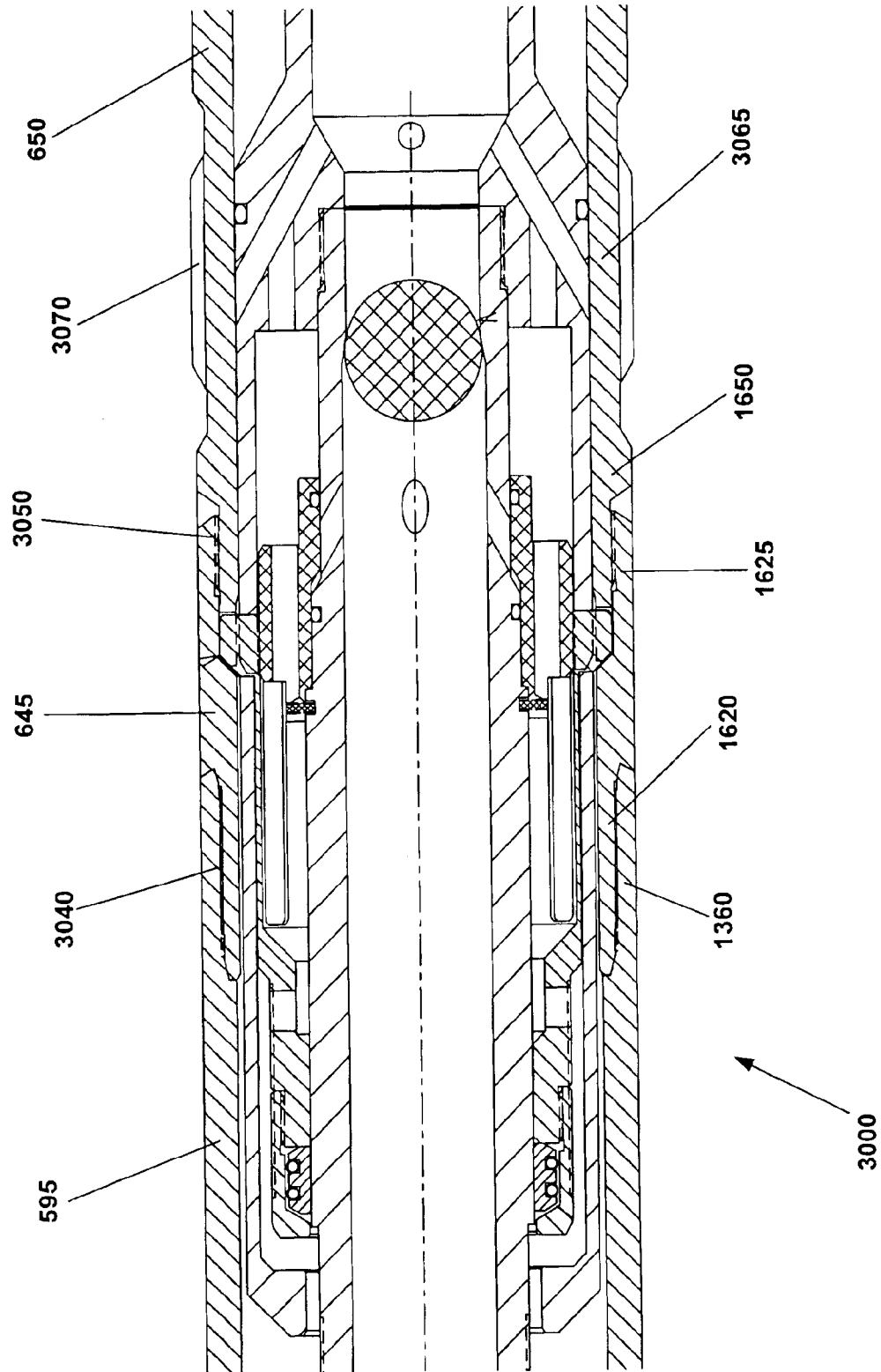


FIGURE 13D

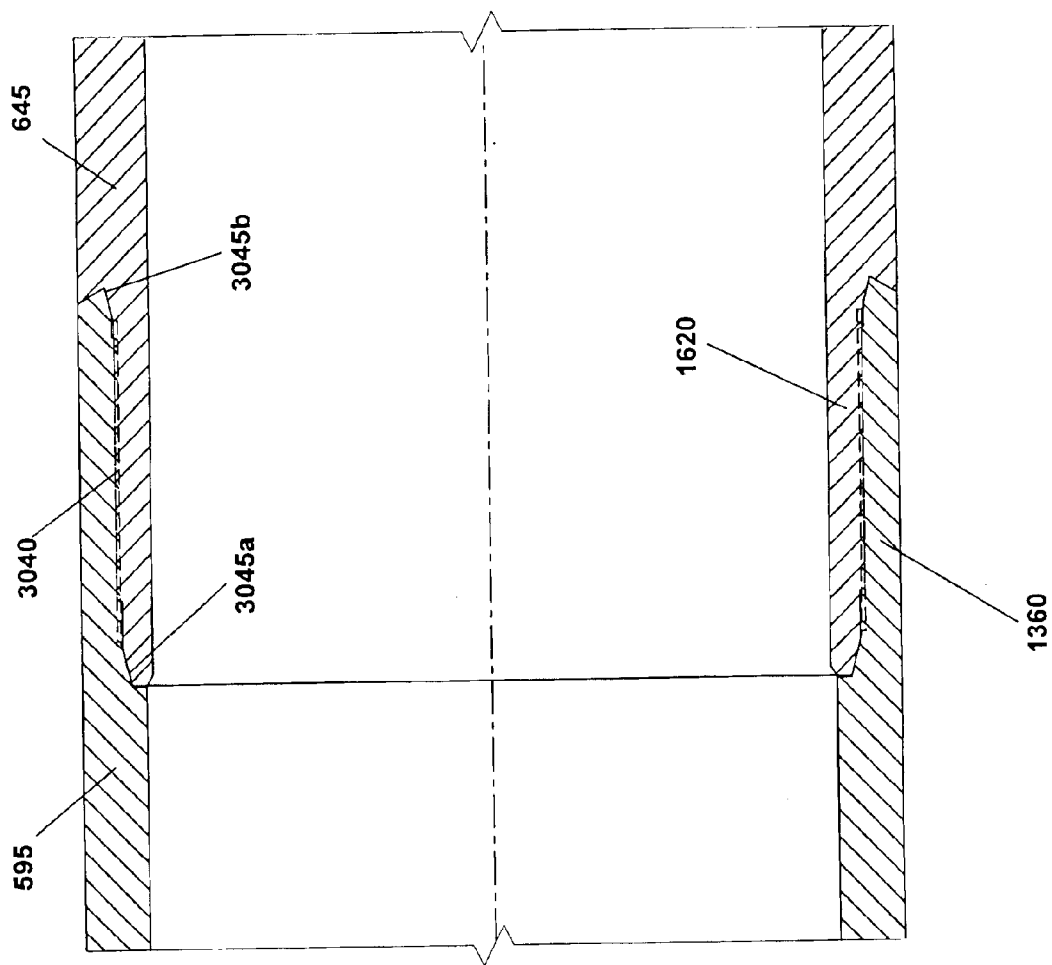


FIGURE 13E

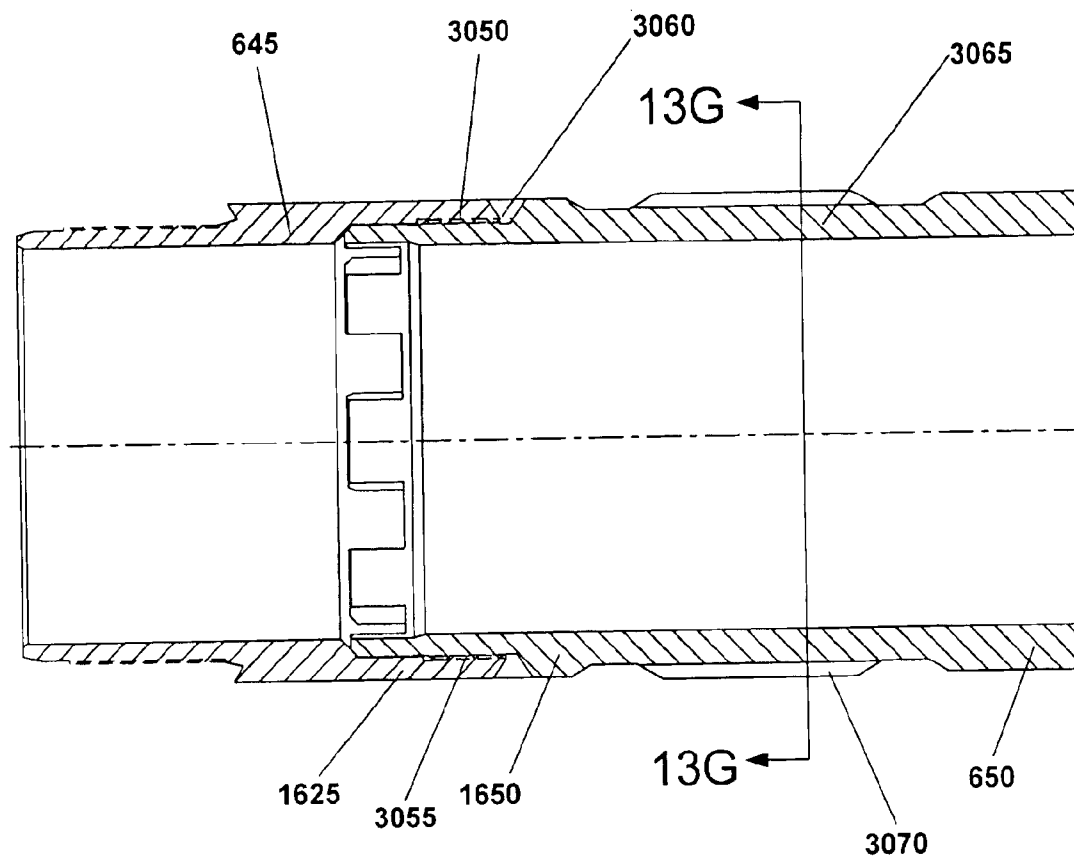


FIGURE 13F

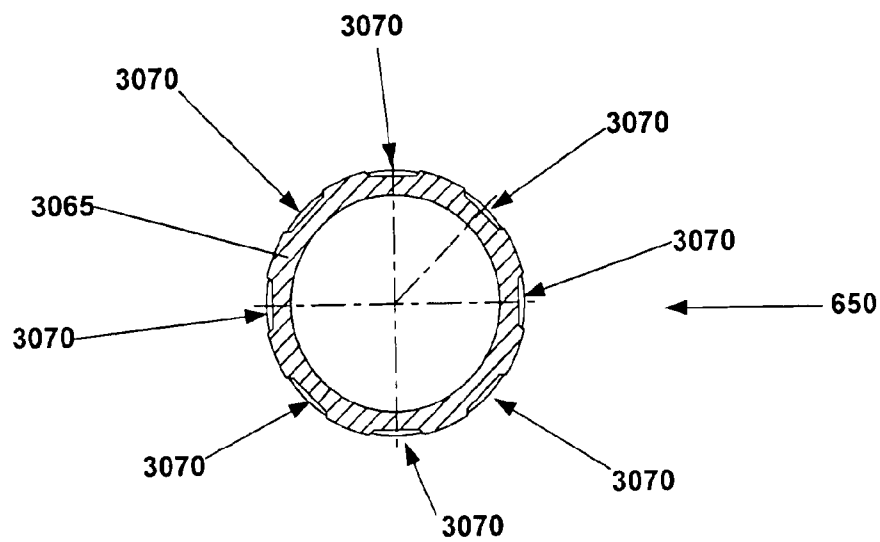


FIGURE 13G

APPARATUS FOR RELEASABLY COUPLING TWO ELEMENTS

CROSS REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

This application is a division of U.S. patent application Ser. No. 09/512,895, filed on Feb. 24, 2000, now U.S. Pat. No. 6,568,471, which claimed the benefit of the filing dates of (1) U.S. Provisional Patent Application Ser. No. 60/121,841, filed on Feb. 26, 1999 and (2) U.S. Provisional Patent Application Ser. No. 60/154,047, filed on Sep. 16, 1999, the disclosures of which are incorporated herein by reference.

This application is related to the following co-pending applications: (1) U.S. patent application Ser. No. 09/440,338, filed on Nov. 15, 1999, which issued as U.S. Pat. No. 6,328,113, which claimed the benefit of the filing date of U.S. Provisional Patent Application Ser. No. 60/108,558, filed on Nov. 16, 1998, (2) U.S. patent application Ser. No. 09/454,139, filed on Dec. 3, 1999, which claimed the benefit of the filing date of U.S. Provisional Patent Application Ser. No. 60/111,293, filed on Dec. 7, 1998, (3) U.S. patent application Ser. No. 09/502,350, filed on Feb. 10, 2000, which claimed the benefit of the filing date of U.S. Provisional Patent Application Ser. No. 60/119,611, filed on Feb. 11, 1999, (4) U.S. patent application Ser. No. 09/510,913, filed on Feb. 23, 2000, which claimed the benefit of the filing date of U.S. Provisional Patent Application Ser. No. 60/121,702, filed on Feb. 25, 1999, (5) U.S. patent application Ser. No. 09/511,941, filed on Feb. 24, 2000, which claimed the benefit of the filing date of U.S. Provisional Patent Application No. 60/121,907, filed on Feb. 26, 1999, (6) U.S. Provisional Patent Application Ser. No. 60/124,042, filed on Mar. 11, 1999, (7) U.S. Provisional Patent Application Ser. No. 60/131,106, filed on Apr. 26, 1999, (8) U.S. Provisional Patent Application Ser. No. 60/137,998, filed on Jun. 7, 1999, (9) U.S. Provisional Patent Application Ser. No. 60/143,039, filed on Jul. 9, 1999, and (10) U.S. Provisional Patent Application Ser. No. 60/146,203, filed on Jul. 29, 1999.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

This invention relates generally to wellbore casings, and in particular to wellbore casings that are formed using expandable tubing.

Conventionally, when a wellbore is created, a number of casings are installed in the borehole to prevent collapse of the borehole wall and to prevent undesired outflow of drilling fluid into the formation or inflow of fluid from the formation into the borehole. The borehole is drilled in intervals whereby a casing which is to be installed in a lower borehole interval is lowered through a previously installed casing of an upper borehole interval. As a consequence of this procedure the casing of the lower interval is of smaller diameter than the casing of the upper interval. Thus, the casings are in a nested arrangement with casing diameters decreasing in downward direction. Cement annuli are provided between the outer surfaces of the casings and the borehole wall to seal the casings from the borehole wall. As a consequence of this nested arrangement a relatively large borehole diameter is required at the upper part of the wellbore. Such a large borehole diameter involves increased costs due to heavy casing handling equipment, large drill bits and increased volumes of drilling fluid and drill cuttings. Moreover, increased drilling rig time is involved due to required cement pumping, cement hardening, required equipment changes due to large variations in hole diameters

drilled in the course of the well, and the large volume of cuttings drilled and removed.

Conventionally, at the surface end of the wellbore, a wellhead is formed that typically includes a surface casing, a number of production and/or drilling spools, valving, and a Christmas tree. Typically the wellhead further includes a concentric arrangement of casings including a production casing and one or more intermediate casings. The casings are typically supported using load bearing slips positioned above the ground. The conventional design and construction of wellheads is expensive and complex.

The present invention is directed to overcoming one or more of the limitations of the existing procedures for forming wellbores and wellheads.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

According to one aspect of the present invention, an apparatus for coupling two elements is provided that includes an outer tubular member defining one or more outer tubular member slots, an inner tubular member defining one or more inner tubular member slots positioned within the outer tubular member, and a coupling assembly for releasably coupling the outer tubular member to the inner tubular member, comprising: a tubular coupling body movably coupled to the inner tubular member, one or more coupling arms extending from the tubular coupling body, and coupling elements extending from corresponding coupling arms adapted to mate with corresponding outer tubular member and inner tubular member slots.

According to another aspect of the present invention, an apparatus is provided that includes an outer tubular member, an inner tubular member positioned within the outer tubular member, and a coupling assembly for releasably coupling the outer tubular member to the inner tubular member at a plurality of discrete circumferentially spaced apart locations.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1A is a cross-sectional view illustrating the placement of an embodiment of an apparatus for creating a casing within a well borehole.

FIG. 1B is a cross-sectional view illustrating the injection of a fluidic material into the well borehole of FIG. 1A.

FIG. 1C is a cross-sectional view illustrating the injection of a wiper plug into the apparatus of FIG. 1B.

FIG. 1D is a fragmentary cross-sectional view illustrating the injection of a ball plug and a fluidic material into the apparatus of FIG. 1C.

FIG. 1E is a fragmentary cross-sectional view illustrating the continued injection of fluidic material into the apparatus of FIG. 1D in order to radially expand a tubular member.

FIG. 1F is a cross-sectional view of the completed wellbore casing.

FIG. 2A is a cross-sectional illustration of a portion of an embodiment of an apparatus for forming and/or repairing a wellbore, pipeline or structural support.

FIG. 2B is an enlarged illustration of a portion of the apparatus of FIG. 2A.

FIG. 2C is an enlarged illustration of a portion of the apparatus of FIG. 2A.

FIG. 2D is an enlarged illustration of a portion of the apparatus of FIG. 2A.

FIG. 2E is a cross-sectional illustration of the apparatus of FIG. 2A.

FIG. 2F is a cross-sectional illustration of another portion of the apparatus of FIG. 2A.

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FIG. 2G is an enlarged illustration of a portion of the apparatus of FIG. 2F.

FIG. 2H is an enlarged illustration of a portion of the apparatus of FIG. 2F.

FIG. 2I is an enlarged illustration of a portion of the apparatus of FIG. 2F.

FIG. 2J is a cross-sectional illustration of another portion of the apparatus of FIG. 2A.

FIG. 2K is an enlarged illustration of a portion of the apparatus of FIG. 2J.

FIG. 2L is an enlarged illustration of a portion of the apparatus of FIG. 2J.

FIG. 2M is an enlarged illustration of a portion of the apparatus of FIG. 2J.

FIG. 2N is an enlarged illustration of a portion of the apparatus of FIG. 2J.

FIG. 2O is a cross-sectional illustration of the apparatus of FIG. 2J.

FIGS. 3A to 3D are exploded views of a portion of the apparatus of FIGS. 2A to 2O.

FIG. 3E is a cross-sectional illustration of the outer collet support member and the liner hanger setting sleeve of the apparatus of FIGS. 2A to 2O.

FIG. 3F is a front view of the locking dog spring of the apparatus of FIGS. 2A to 2O.

FIG. 3G is a front view of the locking dogs of the apparatus of FIGS. 2A to 2O.

FIG. 3H is a front view of the collet assembly of the apparatus of FIGS. 2A to 2O.

FIG. 3I is a front view of the collet retaining sleeve of the apparatus of FIGS. 2A to 2O.

FIG. 3J is a front view of the collet retaining adaptor of the apparatus of FIGS. 2A to 2O.

FIGS. 4A to 4G are fragmentary cross-sectional illustrations of an embodiment of a method for placing the apparatus of FIGS. 2A to 2O within a wellbore.

FIGS. 5A to 5C are fragmentary cross-sectional illustrations of an embodiment of a method for decoupling the liner hanger, the outer collet support member, and the liner hanger setting sleeve from the apparatus of FIGS. 4A to 4G.

FIGS. 6A to 6C are fragmentary cross-sectional illustrations of an embodiment of a method for releasing the lead wiper from the apparatus of FIGS. 4A to 4G.

FIGS. 7A to 7G are fragmentary cross-sectional illustrations of an embodiment of a method for cementing the region outside of the apparatus of FIGS. 6A to 6C.

FIGS. 8A to 8C are fragmentary cross-sectional illustrations of an embodiment of a method for releasing the tail wiper from the apparatus of FIGS. 7A to 7G.

FIGS. 9A to 9H are fragmentary cross-sectional illustrations of an embodiment of a method for radially expanding the liner hanger of the apparatus of FIGS. 8A to 8C.

FIGS. 10A to 10E are fragmentary cross-sectional illustrations of the completion of the radial expansion of the liner hanger using the apparatus of FIGS. 9A to 9H.

FIGS. 11A to 11E are fragmentary cross-sectional illustrations of the decoupling of the radially expanded liner hanger from the apparatus of FIGS. 10A to 10E.

FIGS. 12A to 12C are fragmentary cross-sectional illustrations of the completed wellbore casing.

FIG. 13A is a cross-sectional illustration of a portion of an alternative embodiment of an apparatus for forming and/or repairing a wellbore, pipeline or structural support.

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FIG. 13B is a cross-sectional view of the standoff adaptor of the apparatus of FIG. 13A.

FIG. 13C is a front view of the standoff adaptor of FIG. 13B.

FIG. 13D is a cross-sectional illustration of another portion of an alternative embodiment of the apparatus of FIG. 13A.

FIG. 13E is an enlarged view of the threaded connection between the liner hanger and the outer collet support member of FIG. 13D.

FIG. 13F is an enlarged view of the connection between the outer collet support member 645 and the liner hanger setting sleeve 650 of FIG. 13D.

FIG. 13G is a cross-sectional view of the liner hanger setting sleeve of FIG. 13F.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE ILLUSTRATIVE EMBODIMENTS

An apparatus and method for forming a wellbore casing within a subterranean formation is provided. The apparatus and method permits a wellbore casing to be formed in a subterranean formation by placing a tubular member and a mandrel in a new section of a wellbore, and then extruding the tubular member off of the mandrel by pressurizing an interior portion of the tubular member. The apparatus and method further permits adjacent tubular members in the wellbore to be joined using an overlapping joint that prevents fluid and or gas passage. The apparatus and method further permits a new tubular member to be supported by an existing tubular member by expanding the new tubular member into engagement with the existing tubular member. The apparatus and method further minimizes the reduction in the hole size of the wellbore casing necessitated by the addition of new sections of wellbore casing.

A crossover valve apparatus and method for controlling the radial expansion of a tubular member is also provided. The crossover valve assembly permits the initiation of the radial expansion of a tubular member to be precisely initiated and controlled.

A force multiplier apparatus and method for applying an axial force to an expansion cone is also provided. The force multiplier assembly permits the amount of axial driving force applied to the expansion cone to be increased. In this manner, the radial expansion process is improved.

A radial expansion apparatus and method for radially expanding a tubular member is also provided. The radial expansion apparatus preferably includes a mandrel, an expansion cone, a centralizer, and a lubrication assembly for lubricating the interface between the expansion cone and the tubular member. The radial expansion apparatus improves the efficiency of the radial expansion process.

A preload assembly for applying a predetermined axial force to an expansion cone is also provided. The preload assembly preferably includes a compressed spring and a spacer for controlling the amount of compression of the spring. The compressed spring in turn is used to apply an axial force to the expansion cone. The preload assembly improves the radial expansion process by presetting the position of the expansion cone using a predetermined axial force.

A coupling assembly for controllably removably coupling an expandable tubular member to a support member is also provided. The coupling assembly preferably includes an emergency release in order to permit the coupling assembly to be decoupled in an emergency.

In several alternative embodiments, the apparatus and methods are used to form and/or repair wellbore casings, pipelines, and/or structural supports.

Referring initially to FIGS. 1A–1F, an embodiment of an apparatus and method for forming a wellbore casing within a subterranean formation will now be described. As illustrated in FIG. 1A, a wellbore **100** is positioned in a subterranean formation **105**. The wellbore **100** includes an existing cased section **110** having a tubular casing **115** and an annular outer layer of cement **120**.

As illustrated in FIG. 1A, an apparatus **200** for forming a wellbore casing in a subterranean formation is then positioned in the wellbore **100**.

The apparatus **200** preferably includes a first support member **205**, a manifold **210**, a second support member **215**, a tubular member **220**, a shoe **225**, an expansion cone **230**, first sealing members **235**, second sealing members **240**, third sealing members **245**, fourth sealing members **250**, an anchor **255**, a first passage **260**, a second passage **265**, a third passage **270**, a fourth passage **275**, a throat **280**, a fifth passage **285**, a sixth passage **290**, a seventh passage **295**, an annular chamber **300**, a chamber **305**, and a chamber **310**. In a preferred embodiment, the apparatus **200** is used to radially expand the tubular member **220** into intimate contact with the tubular casing **115**. In this manner, the tubular member **220** is coupled to the tubular casing **115**. In this manner, the apparatus **200** is preferably used to form or repair a wellbore casing, a pipeline, or a structural support. In a particularly preferred embodiment, the apparatus is used to repair or form a wellbore casing.

The first support member **205** is coupled to a conventional surface support and the manifold **210**. The first support member **205** may be fabricated from any number of conventional commercially available tubular support members. In a preferred embodiment, the first support member **205** is fabricated from alloy steel having a minimum yield strength of about 75,000 to 140,000 psi in order to provide high strength and resistance to abrasion and fluid erosion. In a preferred embodiment, the first support member **205** further includes the first passage **260** and the second passage **265**.

The manifold **210** is coupled to the first support member **205**, the second support member **215**, the sealing members **235a** and **235b**, and the tubular member **200**. The manifold **210** preferably includes the first passage **260**, the third passage **270**, the fourth passage **275**, the throat **280** and the fifth passage **285**. The manifold **210** may be fabricated from any number of conventional tubular members.

The second support member **215** is coupled to the manifold **210**, the sealing members **245a**, **245b**, and **245c**, and the expansion cone **230**. The second support member **215** may be fabricated from any number of conventional commercially available tubular support members. In a preferred embodiment, the second support member **215** is fabricated from alloy steel having a minimum yield strength of about 75,000 to 140,000 psi in order to provide high strength and resistance to abrasion and fluid erosion. In a preferred embodiment, the second support member **215** further includes the fifth passage **285**.

The tubular member **220** is coupled to the sealing members **235a** and **235b** and the shoe **225**. The tubular member **220** is further movably coupled to the expansion cone **230** and the sealing members **240a** and **240b**. The first support member **205** may comprise any number of conventional tubular members. The tubular member **220** may be fabricated from any number of conventional commercially available tubular members. In a preferred embodiment, the

tubular member **220** is further provided substantially as described in one or more of the following: (1) U.S. patent application Ser. No. 09/440,338, filed on Nov. 15, 1999, which issued as U.S. Pat. No. 6,328,113, which claimed benefit of the filing date of U.S. Provisional Patent Application Ser. No. 60/108,558, filed on Nov. 16, 1998, (2) U.S. patent application Ser. No. 09/454,139, filed on Dec. 3, 1999, which claimed benefit of the filing date of U.S. Provisional Patent Application Ser. No. 60/111,293, filed on Dec. 7, 1998, (3) U.S. patent application Ser. No. 09/502,350, filed on Feb. 10, 2000, which claimed the benefit of the filing date of U.S. Provisional Patent Application Ser. No. 60/119,611, filed Feb. 11, 1999, (4) U.S. patent application Ser. No. 09/510,913, filed on Feb. 23, 2000, which claimed the benefit of the filing date of U.S. Provisional Patent Application Ser. No. 60/121,702, filed on Feb. 25, 1999, (5) U.S. patent application Ser. No. 09/511,941, filed on Feb. 24, 2000, which claimed the benefit of the filing date of U.S. Provisional Patent Application No. 60/121,907, filed Feb. 26, 1999, (6) U.S. Provisional Patent Application Ser. No. 60/124,042, filed on Mar. 11, 1999, (7) U.S. Provisional Patent Application Ser. No. 60/131,106, filed on Apr. 26, 1999, (8) U.S. Provisional Patent Application Ser. No. 60/137,998, filed on Jun. 7, 1999, (9) U.S. Provisional Patent Application Ser. No. 60/143,039, filed on Jul. 9, 1999, and (10) U.S. Provisional Patent Application Ser. No. 60/146,203, filed on Jul. 29, 1999, the disclosures of which are incorporated by reference.

The shoe **225** is coupled to the tubular member **220**. The shoe **225** preferably includes the sixth passage **290** and the seventh passage **295**. The shoe **225** preferably is fabricated from a tubular member. In a preferred embodiment, the shoe **225** is further provided substantially as described in one or more of the following: (1) U.S. patent application Ser. No. 09/440,338, filed on Nov. 15, 1999, which claimed benefit of the filing date of U.S. Provisional Patent Application Ser. No. 60/108,558, filed on Nov. 16, 1998, (2) U.S. patent application Ser. No. 09/454,139, filed on Dec. 3, 1999, which claimed benefit of the filing date of U.S. Provisional Patent Application Ser. No. 60/111,293, filed on Dec. 7, 1998, (3) U.S. patent application Ser. No. 09/502,350, filed on Feb. 10, 2000, which claimed the benefit of the filing date of U.S. Provisional Patent Application Ser. No. 60/119,611, filed Feb. 11, 1999, (4) U.S. patent application Ser. No. 09/510,913, filed on Feb. 23, 2000, which claimed the benefit of the filing date of U.S. Provisional Patent Application Ser. No. 60/121,702, filed on Feb. 25, 1999, (5) U.S. patent application Ser. No. 09/511,941, filed on Feb. 24, 2000, which claimed the benefit of the filing date of U.S. Provisional Patent Application No. 60/121,907, filed Feb. 26, 1999, (6) U.S. Provisional Patent Application Ser. No. 60/124,042, filed on Mar. 11, 1999, (7) U.S. Provisional Patent Application Ser. No. 60/131,106, filed on Apr. 26, 1999, (8) U.S. Provisional Patent Application Ser. No. 60/137,998, filed on Jun. 7, 1999, (9) U.S. Provisional Patent Application Ser. No. 60/143,039, filed on Jul. 9, 1999, and (10) U.S. Provisional Patent Application Ser. No. 60/146,203, filed on Jul. 29, 1999, the disclosures of which are incorporated by reference.

The expansion cone **230** is coupled to the sealing members **240a** and **240b** and the sealing members **245a**, **245b**, and **245c**. The expansion cone **230** is movably coupled to the second support member **215** and the tubular member **220**. The expansion cone **230** preferably includes an annular member having one or more outer conical surfaces for engaging the inside diameter of the tubular member **220**. In this manner, axial movement of the expansion cone **230**

radially expands the tubular member **220**. In a preferred embodiment, the expansion cone **230** is further provided substantially as described in one or more of the following: (1) U.S. patent application Ser. No. 09/440,338, filed on Nov. 15, 1999, which issued as U.S. Pat. No. 6,328,113, which claimed benefit of the filing date of U.S. Provisional Patent Application Ser. No. 60/108,558, filed on Nov. 16, 1998, (2) U.S. patent application Ser. No. 09/454,139, filed on Dec. 3, 1999, which claimed benefit of the filing date of U.S. Provisional Patent Application Ser. No. 60/111,293, filed on Dec. 7, 1998, (3) U.S. patent application Ser. No. 09/502,350, filed on Feb. 10, 2000, which claimed the benefit of the filing date of U.S. Provisional Patent Application Ser. No. 60/119,611, filed Feb. 11, 1999, (4) U.S. patent application Ser. No. 09/510,913, filed on Feb. 23, 2000, which claimed the benefit of the filing date of U.S. Provisional Patent Application Ser. No. 60/121,702, filed on Feb. 25, 1999, (5) U.S. patent application Ser. No. 09/511,941, filed on Feb. 24, 2000, which claimed the benefit of the filing date of U.S. Provisional Patent Application No. 60/121,907, filed Feb. 26, 1999, (6) U.S. Provisional Patent Application Ser. No. 60/124,042, filed on Mar. 11, 1999, (7) U.S. Provisional Patent Application Ser. No. 60/131,106, filed on Apr. 26, 1999, (8) U.S. Provisional Patent Application Ser. No. 60/137,998, filed on Jun. 7, 1999, (9) U.S. Provisional Patent Application Ser. No. 60/143,039, filed on Jul. 9, 1999, and (10) U.S. Provisional Patent Application Ser. No. 60/146,203, filed on Jul. 29, 1999, the disclosures of which are incorporated by reference.

The first sealing members **235a** and **235b** are coupled to the manifold **210** and the tubular member **220**. The first sealing members **235a** and **235b** preferably fluidically isolate the annular chamber **300** from the chamber **310**. In this manner, annular chamber **300** is optimally pressurized during operation of the apparatus **200**. The first sealing members **235a** and **235b** may comprise any number of conventional commercially available sealing members. In a preferred embodiment, the first sealing members **235a** and **235b** include O-rings with seal backups available from Parker Seals in order to provide a fluidic seal between the tubular member **200** and the expansion cone **230** during axial movement of the expansion cone **230**.

In a preferred embodiment, the first sealing member **235a** and **235b** further include conventional controllable latching members for removably coupling the manifold **210** to the tubular member **200**. In this manner, the tubular member **200** is optimally supported by the manifold **210**. Alternatively, the tubular member **200** is preferably removably supported by the first support member **205** using conventional controllable latching members.

The second sealing members **240a** and **240b** are coupled to the expansion cone **230**. The second sealing members **240a** and **240b** are movably coupled to the tubular member **220**. The second sealing members **240a** and **240b** preferably fluidically isolate the annular chamber **300** from the chamber **305** during axial movement of the expansion cone **230**. In this manner, the annular chamber **300** is optimally pressurized. The second sealing members **240a** and **240b** may comprise any number of conventional commercially available sealing members.

In a preferred embodiment, the second sealing members **240a** and **240b** further include a conventional centralizer and/or bearings for supporting and positioning the expansion cone **230** within the tubular member **200** during axial movement of the expansion cone **230**. In this manner, the position and orientation of the expansion cone **230** is optimally controlled during axial movement of the expansion cone **230**.

The third sealing members **245a**, **245b**, and **245c** are coupled to the expansion cone **230**. The third sealing members **245a**, **245b**, and **245c** are movably coupled to the second support member **215**. The third sealing members **245a**, **245b**, and **245c** preferably fluidically isolate the annular chamber **300** from the chamber **305** during axial movement of the expansion cone **230**. In this manner, the annular chamber **300** is optimally pressurized. The third sealing members **245a**, **245b** and **240c** may comprise any number of conventional commercially available sealing members. In a preferred embodiment, the third sealing members **245a**, **245b**, and **245c** include O-rings with seal backups available from Parker Seals in order to provide a fluidic seal between the expansion cone **230** and the second support member **215** during axial movement of the expansion cone **230**.

In a preferred embodiment, the third sealing members **245a**, **245b** and **240c** further include a conventional centralizer and/or bearings for supporting and positioning the expansion cone **230** around the second support member **215** during axial movement of the expansion cone **230**. In this manner, the position and orientation of the expansion cone **230** is optimally controlled during axial movement of the expansion cone **230**.

The fourth sealing member **250** is coupled to the tubular member **220**. The fourth sealing member **250** preferably fluidically isolates the chamber **315** after radial expansion of the tubular member **200**. In this manner, the chamber **315** outside of the radially expanded tubular member **200** is fluidically isolated. The fourth sealing member **250** may comprise any number of conventional commercially available sealing members. In a preferred embodiment, the fourth sealing member **250** is a RTTS packer ring available from Halliburton Energy Services in order to optimally provide a fluidic seal.

The anchor **255** is coupled to the tubular member **220**. The anchor **255** preferably anchors the tubular member **200** to the casing **115** after radial expansion of the tubular member **200**. In this manner, the radially expanded tubular member **200** is optimally supported within the wellbore **100**. The anchor **255** may comprise any number of conventional commercially available anchoring devices. In a preferred embodiment, the anchor **255** includes RTTS mechanical slips available from Halliburton Energy Services in order to optimally anchor the tubular member **200** to the casing **115** after the radial expansion of the tubular member **200**.

The first passage **260** is fluidically coupled to a conventional surface pump, the second passage **265**, the third passage **270**, the fourth passage **275**, and the throat **280**. The first passage **260** is preferably adapted to convey fluidic materials including drilling mud, cement and/or lubricants at flow rates and pressures ranging from about 0 to 650 gallons/minute and 0 to 10,000 psi, respectively in order to optimally form an annular cement liner and radially expand the tubular member **200**.

The second passage **265** is fluidically coupled to the first passage **260** and the chamber **310**. The second passage **265** is preferably adapted to controllably convey fluidic materials from the first passage **260** to the chamber **310**. In this manner, surge pressures during placement of the apparatus **200** within the wellbore **100** are optimally minimized. In a preferred embodiment, the second passage **265** further includes a valve for controlling the flow of fluidic materials through the second passage **265**.

The third passage **270** is fluidically coupled to the first passage **260** and the annular chamber **300**. The third passage **270** is preferably adapted to convey fluidic materials

between the first passage 260 and the annular chamber 300. In this manner, the annular chamber 300 is optimally pressurized.

The fourth passage 275 is fluidically coupled to the first passage 260, the fifth passage 285, and the chamber 310. The fourth passage 275 is preferably adapted to convey fluidic materials between the fifth passage 285 and the chamber 310. In this manner, during the radial expansion of the tubular member 200, fluidic materials from the chamber 305 are transmitted to the chamber 310. In a preferred embodiment, the fourth passage 275 further includes a pressure compensated valve and/or a pressure compensated orifice in order to optimally control the flow of fluidic materials through the fourth passage 275.

The throat 280 is fluidically coupled to the first passage 260 and the fifth passage 285. The throat 280 is preferably adapted to receive a conventional fluidic plug or ball. In this manner, the first passage 260 is fluidically isolated from the fifth passage 285.

The fifth passage 285 is fluidically coupled to the throat 280, the fourth passage 275, and the chamber 305. The fifth passage 285 is preferably adapted to convey fluidic materials to and from the first passage 260, the fourth passage 275, and the chamber 305.

The sixth passage 290 is fluidically coupled to the chamber 305 and the seventh passage 295. The sixth passage is preferably adapted to convey fluidic materials to and from the chamber 305. The sixth passage 290 is further preferably adapted to receive a conventional plug or dart. In this manner, the chamber 305 is optimally fluidically isolated from the chamber 315.

The seventh passage 295 is fluidically coupled to the sixth passage 290 and the chamber 315. The seventh passage 295 is preferably adapted to convey fluidic materials between the sixth passage 290 and the chamber 315.

The annular chamber 300 is fluidically coupled to the third passage 270. Pressurization of the annular chamber 300 preferably causes the expansion cone 230 to be displaced in the axial direction. In this manner, the tubular member 200 is radially expanded by the expansion cone 230. During operation of the apparatus 200, the annular chamber 300 is preferably adapted to be pressurized to operating pressures ranging from about 1000 to 10000 psi in order to optimally radially expand the tubular member 200.

The chamber 305 is fluidically coupled to the fifth passage 285 and the sixth passage 290. During operation of the apparatus 200, the chamber 305 is preferably fluidically isolated from the annular chamber 300 and the chamber 315 and fluidically coupled to the chamber 310.

The chamber 310 is fluidically coupled to the fourth passage 275. During operation of the apparatus 200, the chamber 310 is preferably fluidically isolated from the annular chamber 300 and fluidically coupled to the chamber 305.

During operation, as illustrated in FIG. 1A, the apparatus 200 is preferably placed within the wellbore 100 in a predetermined overlapping relationship with the preexisting casing 115. During placement of the apparatus 200 within the wellbore 100, fluidic materials within the chamber 315 are preferably conveyed to the chamber 310 using the second, first, fifth, sixth and seventh fluid passages 265, 260, 285, 290 and 295, respectively. In this manner, surge pressures within the wellbore 100 during placement of the apparatus 200 are minimized. Once the apparatus 200 has been placed at the predetermined location within the wellbore 100, the second passage 265 is preferably closed using a conventional valve member.

As illustrated in FIG. 1B, one or more volumes of a non-hardenable fluidic material are then injected into the chamber 315 using the first, fifth, sixth and seventh passages, 260, 285, 290 and 295 in order to ensure that all of the passages are clear. A quantity of a hardenable fluidic sealing material such as, for example, cement, is then preferably injected into the chamber 315 using the first, fifth, sixth and seventh passages 260, 285, 290 and 295. In this manner, an annular outer sealing layer is preferably formed around the radially expanded tubular member 200.

As illustrated in FIG. 1C, a conventional wiper plug 320 is then preferably injected into the first passage 260 using a non-hardenable fluidic material. The wiper plug 320 preferably passes through the first and fifth passages, 260 and 285, and into the chamber 305. Inside the chamber 305, the wiper plug 320 preferably forces substantially all of the hardenable fluidic material out of the chamber 305 through the sixth passage 290. The wiper plug 320 then preferably lodges in and fluidically seals off the sixth passage 290. In this manner, the chamber 305 is optimally fluidically isolated from the chamber 315. Furthermore, the amount of hardenable sealing material within the chamber 305 is minimized.

As illustrated in FIG. 1D, a conventional sealing ball or plug 325 is then preferably injected into the first passage 260 using a non-hardenable fluidic material. The sealing ball 325 preferably lodges in and fluidically seals off the throat 280. In this manner, the first passage 260 is fluidically isolated from the fifth fluid passage 285. Consequently, the injected non-hardenable fluidic sealing material passes from the first passage 260 into the third passage 270 and into the annular chamber 300. In this manner, the annular chamber 300 is pressurized.

As illustrated in FIG. 1E, continued injection of a non-hardenable fluidic material into the annular chamber 300 preferably increases the operating pressure within the annular chamber 300, and thereby causes the expansion cone 230 to move in the axial direction. In a preferred embodiment, the axial movement of the expansion cone 230 radially expands the tubular member 200. In a preferred embodiment, the annular chamber 300 is pressurized to operating pressures ranging from about 1000 to 10000 psi. during the radial expansion process. In a preferred embodiment, the pressure differential between the first passage 260 and the fifth passage 285 is maintained at least about 1000 to 10000 psi. during the radial expansion process in order to optimally fluidically seal the throat 280 using the sealing ball 325.

In a preferred embodiment, during the axial movement of the expansion cone 230, at least a portion of the interface between the expansion cone 230 and the tubular member 200 is fluidically sealed by the sealing members 240a and 240b. In a preferred embodiment, during the axial movement of the expansion cone 230, at least a portion of the interface between the expansion cone 230 and the second support member 215 is fluidically sealed by the sealing members 245a, 245b and 240c. In this manner, the annular chamber 300 is optimally fluidically isolated from the chamber 305 during the radial expansion process.

During the radial expansion process, the volumetric size of the annular chamber 300 preferably increases while the volumetric size of the chamber 305 preferably decreases during the radial expansion process. In a preferred embodiment, during the radial expansion process, fluidic materials within the decreasing chamber 305 are transmitted to the chamber 310 using the fourth and fifth passages, 275 and 285. In this manner, the rate and amount of axial

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movement of the expansion cone 230 is optimally controlled by the flow rate of fluidic materials conveyed from the chamber 300 to the chamber 310. In a preferred embodiment, the fourth passage 275 further includes a conventional pressure compensated valve in order to optimally control the initiation of the radial expansion process. In a preferred embodiment, the fourth passage 275 further includes a conventional pressure compensated orifice in order to optimally control the rate of the radial expansion process.

In a preferred embodiment, continued radial expansion of the tubular member 200 by the expansion cone 230 causes the sealing members 250 to contact the inside surface of the existing casing 115. In this manner, the interface between the radially expanded tubular member 200 and the preexisting casing 115 is optimally fluidically sealed. Furthermore, in a preferred embodiment, continued radial expansion of the tubular member 200 by the expansion cone 230 causes the anchor 255 to contact and at least partially penetrate the inside surface of the preexisting casing 115. In this manner, the radially expanded tubular member 200 is optimally coupled to the preexisting casing 115.

As illustrated in FIG. 1F, upon the completion of the radial expansion process using the apparatus 200 and the curing of the hardenable fluidic sealing material, a new section of wellbore casing is generated that preferably includes the radially expanded tubular member 200 and an outer annular fluidic sealing member 330. In this manner, a new section of wellbore casing is generated by radially expanding a tubular member into contact with a preexisting section of wellbore casing. In several alternative preferred embodiments, the apparatus 200 is used to form or repair a wellbore casing, a pipeline, or a structural support.

Referring now to FIGS. 2A–2O, and 3A–3J, a preferred embodiment of an apparatus 500 for forming or repairing a wellbore casing, pipeline or structural support will be described. The apparatus 500 preferably includes a first support member 505, a debris shield 510, a second support member 515, one or more crossover valve members 520, a force multiplier outer support member 525, a force multiplier inner support member 530, a force multiplier piston 535, a force multiplier sleeve 540, a first coupling 545, a third support member 550, a spring spacer 555, a preload spring 560, a lubrication fitting 565, a lubrication packer sleeve 570, a body of lubricant 575, a mandrel 580, an expansion cone 585, a centralizer 590, a liner hanger 595, a travel port sealing sleeve 600, a second coupling 605, a collet mandrel 610, a load transfer sleeve 615, one or more locking dogs 620, a locking dog retainer 622, a collet assembly 625, a collet retaining sleeve 635, a collet retaining adapter 640, an outer collet support member 645, a liner hanger setting sleeve 650, one or more crossover valve shear pins 655, one or more set screws 660, one or more collet retaining sleeve shear pins 665, a first passage 670, one or more second passages 675, a third passage 680, one or more crossover valve chambers 685, a primary throat passage 690, a secondary throat passage 695, a fourth passage 700, one or more inner crossover ports 705, one or more outer crossover ports 710, a force multiplier piston chamber 715, a force multiplier exhaust chamber 720, one or more force multiplier exhaust passages 725, a second annular chamber 735, one or more expansion cone travel indicator ports 740, one or more collet release ports 745, a third annular chamber 750, a collet release throat passage 755, a fifth passage 760, one or more sixth passages 765, one or more seventh passages 770, one or more collet sleeve passages 775, one or more force multiplier supply passages 790, a first lubrication

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supply passage 795, a second lubrication supply passage 800, and a collet sleeve release chamber 805.

The first support member 505 is coupled to the debris shield 510 and the second support member 515. The first support member 505 includes the first passage 670 and the second passages 675 for conveying fluidic materials. The first support member 505 preferably has a substantially annular cross section. The first support member 505 may be fabricated from any number of conventional commercially available materials. In a preferred embodiment, the first support member 505 is fabricated from alloy steel having a minimum yield strength ranging from about 75,000 to 140,000 psi in order to optimally provide high strength and resistance to abrasion and fluid erosion. The first support member 505 preferably further includes a first end 1005, a second end 1010, a first threaded portion 1015, a sealing member 1020, a second threaded portion 1025, and a collar 1035.

The first end 1005 of the first support member 505 preferably includes the first threaded portion 1015 and the first passage 670. The first threaded portion 1015 is preferably adapted to be removably coupled to a conventional support member. The first threaded portion 1015 may include any number of conventional commercially available threads. In a preferred embodiment, the first threaded portion 1015 is a 4½" API IF box threaded portion in order to optimally provide high tensile strength.

The second end 1010 of the first support member 505 is preferably adapted to extend within both the debris shield 510 and the second support member 515. The second end 1010 of the first support member 505 preferably includes the sealing member 1020, the second threaded portion 1025, the first passage 670, and the second passages 675. The sealing member 1020 is preferably adapted to fluidically seal the interface between first support member 505 and the second support member 515. The sealing member 1020 may comprise any number of conventional commercially available sealing members. In a preferred embodiment, the sealing member 1020 is an O-ring sealing member available from Parker Seals in order to optimally provide a fluidic seal. The second threaded portion 1025 is preferably adapted to be removably coupled to the second support member 515. The second threaded portion 1025 may comprise any number of conventional commercially available threaded portions. In a preferred embodiment, the second threaded portion 1025 is a stub acme thread available from Halliburton Energy Services in order to optimally provide high tensile strength. In a preferred embodiment, the second end 1010 of the first support member 505 includes a plurality of the passages 675 in order to optimally provide a large flow cross sectional area. The collar 1035 preferably extends from the second end 1010 of the first support member 505 in an outward radial direction. In this manner, the collar 1035 provides a mounting support for the debris shield 510.

The debris shield 510 is coupled to the first support member 505. The debris shield 510 preferably prevents foreign debris from entering the passage 680. In this manner, the operation of the apparatus 200 is optimized. The debris shield 510 preferably has a substantially annular cross section. The debris shield 510 may be fabricated from any number of conventional commercially available materials. In a preferred embodiment, the debris shield 510 is fabricated from alloy steel having a minimum yield strength ranging from about 75,000 to 140,000 psi in order to optimally provide resistance to erosion. The debris shield 510 further preferably includes a first end 1040, a second end 1045, a channel 1050, and a sealing member 1055.

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The first end **1040** of the debris shield **510** is preferably positioned above both the outer surface of the second end **1010** of the first support member **505** and the second passages **675** and below the inner surface of the second support member **515**. In this manner, fluidic materials from the passages **675** flow from the passages **675** to the passage **680**. Furthermore, the first end **1040** of the debris shield **510** also preferably prevents the entry of foreign materials into the passage **680**.

The second end **1045** of the debris shield **510** preferably includes the channel **1050** and the sealing member **1055**. The channel **1050** of the second end **1045** of the debris shield **510** is preferably adapted to mate with and couple to the collar **1035** of the second end **1010** of the first support member **505**. The sealing member **1055** is preferably adapted to seal the interface between the second end **1010** of the first support member **505** and the second end **1045** of the debris shield **510**. The sealing member **1055** may comprise any number of conventional commercially available sealing members. In a preferred embodiment, the sealing member **1055** is an O-ring sealing member available from Parker Seals in order to optimally provide a fluidic seal.

The second support member **515** is coupled to the first support member **505**, the force multiplier outer support member **525**, the force multiplier inner support member **530**, and the crossover valve shear pins **655**. The second support member **515** is movably coupled to the crossover valve members **520**. The second support member **515** preferably has a substantially annular cross section. The second support member **515** may be fabricated from any number of conventional commercially available materials. In a preferred embodiment, the second support member **515** is fabricated from alloy steel having a minimum yield strength ranging from about 75,000 to 140,000 psi in order to optimally provide high strength and resistance to abrasion and fluid erosion. The second support member **515** preferably further includes a first end **1060**, an intermediate portion **1065**, a second end **1070**, a first threaded portion **1075**, a second threaded portion **1080**, a third threaded portion **1085**, a first sealing member **1090**, a second sealing member **1095**, and a third sealing member **1100**.

The first end **1060** of the second support member **515** is preferably adapted to contain the second end **1010** of the first support member **505** and the debris shield **510**. The first end **1060** of the second support member **515** preferably includes the third passage **680** and the first threaded portion **1075**. The first threaded portion **1075** of the first end **1060** of the second support member **515** is preferably adapted to be removably coupled to the second threaded portion **1025** of the second end **1010** of the first support member **505**. The first threaded portion **1075** may include any number of conventional commercially available threaded portions. In a preferred embodiment, the first threaded portion **1075** is a stub acme thread available from Halliburton Energy Services in order to optimally provide high tensile strength.

The intermediate portion **1065** of the second support member **515** preferably includes the crossover valve members **520**, the crossover valve shear pins **655**, the crossover valve chambers **685**, the primary throat passage **690**, the secondary throat passage **695**, the fourth passage **700**, the seventh passages **770**, the force multiplier supply passages **790**, the second threaded portion **1080**, the first sealing member **1090**, and the second sealing member **1095**. The second threaded portion **1080** is preferably adapted to be removably coupled to the force multiplier outer support member **525**. The second threaded portion **1080** may include any number of conventional commercially available

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threaded portions. In a preferred embodiment, the second threaded portion **1080** is a stub acme thread available from Halliburton Energy Services in order to optimally provide high tensile strength. The first and second sealing members, **1090** and **1095**, are preferably adapted to fluidically seal the interface between the intermediate portion **1065** of the second support member **515** and the force multiplier outer support member **525**.

The second end **1070** of the second support member **515** preferably includes the fourth passage **700**, the third threaded portion **1085**, and the third sealing member **1100**. The third threaded portion **1085** of the second end **1070** of the second support member **515** is preferably adapted to be removably coupled to the force multiplier inner support member **530**. The third threaded portion **1085** may include any number of conventional commercially available threaded portions. In a preferred embodiment, the third threaded portion **1085** is a stub acme thread available from Halliburton Energy Services in order to optimally provide high tensile strength. The third sealing member **1100** is preferably adapted to fluidically seal the interface between the second end **1070** of the second support member **515** and the force multiplier inner support member **530**. The third sealing member **1100** may comprise any number of conventional commercially available sealing members. In a preferred embodiment, the third sealing member **1100** is an o-ring sealing member available from Parker Seals in order to optimally provide a fluidic seal.

Each crossover valve member **520** is coupled to corresponding crossover valve shear pins **655**. Each crossover valve member **520** is also movably coupled to the second support member **515** and contained within a corresponding crossover valve chamber **685**. Each crossover valve member **520** preferably has a substantially circular cross-section. The crossover valve members **520** may be fabricated from any number of conventional commercially available materials. In a preferred embodiment, the crossover valve members **520** are fabricated from alloy steel having a minimum yield strength ranging from about 75,000 to 140,000 psi in order to optimally provide high strength and resistance to abrasion and fluid erosion. In a preferred embodiment, each crossover valve member **520** includes a first end **1105**, an intermediate portion **1110**, a second end **1115**, a first sealing member **1120**, a second sealing member **1125**, and recesses **1130**.

The first end **1105** of the crossover valve member **520** preferably includes the first sealing member **1120**. The outside diameter of the first end **1105** of the crossover valve member **520** is preferably less than the inside diameter of the corresponding crossover valve chamber **685** in order to provide a sliding fit. In a preferred embodiment, the outside diameter of the first end **1105** of the crossover valve member **520** is preferably about 0.005 to 0.010 inches less than the inside diameter of the corresponding crossover valve chamber **685** in order to provide an optimal sliding fit. The first sealing member **1120** is preferably adapted to fluidically seal the dynamic interface between the first end **1105** of the crossover valve member **520** and the corresponding crossover valve chamber **685**. The first sealing member **1120** may include any number of conventional commercially available sealing members. In a preferred embodiment, the first sealing member **1120** is an o-ring sealing member available from Parker Seals in order to optimally provide a dynamic fluidic seal.

The intermediate end **1110** of the crossover valve member **520** preferably has an outside diameter that is less than the outside diameters of the first and second ends, **1105** and **1115**, of the crossover valve member **520**. In this manner,

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fluidic materials are optimally conveyed from the corresponding inner crossover port **705** to the corresponding outer crossover ports **710** during operation of the apparatus **200**.

The second end **1115** of the crossover valve member **520** preferably includes the second sealing member **1125** and the recesses **1130**. The outside diameter of the second end **1115** of the crossover valve member **520** is preferably less than the inside diameter of the corresponding crossover valve chamber **685** in order to provide a sliding fit. In a preferred embodiment, the outside diameter of the second end **1115** of the crossover valve member **520** is preferably about 0.005 to 0.010 inches less than the inside diameter of the corresponding crossover valve chamber **685** in order to provide an optimal sliding fit. The second sealing member **1125** is preferably adapted to fluidically seal the dynamic interface between the second end **1115** of the crossover valve member **520** and the corresponding crossover valve chamber **685**. The second sealing member **1125** may include any number of conventional commercially available sealing members. In a preferred embodiment, the second sealing member **1125** is an o-ring sealing member available from Parker Seals in order to optimally provide a dynamic fluidic seal. The recesses **1130** are preferably adapted to receive the corresponding crossover valve shear pins **655**. In this manner, the crossover valve member **520** is maintained in a substantially stationary position.

The force multiplier outer support member **525** is coupled to the second support member **515** and the liner hanger **595**. The force multiplier outer support member **525** preferably has a substantially annular cross section. The force multiplier outer support member **525** may be fabricated from any number of conventional commercially available materials. In a preferred embodiment, the force multiplier outer support member **525** is fabricated from alloy steel having a minimum yield strength ranging from about 75,000 to 140,000 psi in order to optimally provide high strength and resistance to abrasion and fluid erosion. The force multiplier outer support member **525** preferably further includes a first end **1135**, a second end **1140**, a first threaded portion **1145**, and a sealing member **1150**.

The first end **1135** of the force multiplier outer support member **525** preferably includes the first threaded portion **1145** and the force multiplier piston chamber **715**. The first threaded portion **1145** is preferably adapted to be removably coupled to the second threaded portion **1080** of the intermediate portion **1065** of the second support member **515**. The first threaded portion **1145** may include any number of conventional commercially available threads. In a preferred embodiment, the first threaded portion **1145** is a stub acme thread in order to optimally provide high tensile strength.

The second end **1140** of the force multiplier outer support member **525** is preferably adapted to extend within at least a portion of the liner hanger **595**. The second end **1140** of the force multiplier outer support member **525** preferably includes the sealing member **1150** and the force multiplier piston chamber **715**. The sealing member **1150** is preferably adapted to fluidically seal the interface between the second end **1140** of the force multiplier outer support member **525** and the liner hanger **595**. The sealing member **1150** may comprise any number of conventional commercially available sealing members. In a preferred embodiment, the sealing member **1150** is an o-ring with seal backups available from Parker Seals in order to optimally provide a fluidic seal.

The force multiplier inner support member **530** is coupled to the second support member **515** and the first coupling

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545. The force multiplier inner support member **530** is movably coupled to the force multiplier piston **535**. The force multiplier inner support member **530** preferably has a substantially annular cross-section. The force multiplier inner support member **530** may be fabricated from any number of conventional commercially available materials. In a preferred embodiment, the force multiplier inner support member **530** is fabricated from alloy steel having a minimum yield strength ranging from about 75,000 to 140,000 psi in order to optimally provide high strength and resistance to abrasion and fluid erosion. In a preferred embodiment, the outer surface of the force multiplier inner support member **530** includes a nickel plating in order to provide an optimal dynamic seal with the force multiplier piston **535**. In a preferred embodiment, the force multiplier inner support member **530** further includes a first end **1155**, a second end **1160**, a first threaded portion **1165**, and a second threaded portion **1170**.

The first end **1155** of the force multiplier inner support member **530** preferably includes the first threaded portion **1165** and the fourth passage **700**. The first threaded portion **1165** of the first end **1155** of the force multiplier inner support member **530** is preferably adapted to be removably coupled to the third threaded portion **1085** of the second end **1070** of the second support member **515**. The first threaded portion **1165** may comprise any number of conventional commercially available threaded portions. In a preferred embodiment, the first threaded portion **1165** is a stub acme thread available from Halliburton Energy Services in order to optimally provide high tensile strength.

The second end **1160** of the force multiplier inner support member **530** preferably includes the second threaded portion **1170**, the fourth passage **700**, and the force multiplier exhaust passages **725**. The second threaded portion **1170** of the second end **1160** of the force multiplier inner support member **530** is preferably adapted to be removably coupled to the first coupling **545**. The second threaded portion **1170** may comprise any number of conventional commercially available threaded portions. In a preferred embodiment, the second threaded portion **1170** is a stub acme thread available from Halliburton Energy Services in order to optimally provide high tensile strength.

The force multiplier piston **535** is coupled to the force multiplier sleeve **540**. The force multiplier piston **535** is movably coupled to the force multiplier inner support member **530**. The force multiplier piston **535** preferably has a substantially annular cross-section. The force multiplier piston **535** may be fabricated from any number of conventional commercially available materials. In a preferred embodiment, the force multiplier piston **535** is fabricated from alloy steel having a minimum yield strength ranging from about 75,000 to 140,000 psi in order to optimally provide high strength and resistance to abrasion and fluid erosion. In a preferred embodiment, the force multiplier piston **535** further includes a first end **1175**, a second end **1180**, a first sealing member **1185**, a first threaded portion **1190**, and a second sealing member **1195**.

The first end **1175** of the force multiplier piston **535** preferably includes the first sealing member **1185**. The first sealing member **1185** is preferably adapted to fluidically seal the dynamic interface between the inside surface of the force multiplier piston **535** and the outside surface of the inner force multiplier support member **530**. The first sealing member **1185** may include any number of conventional commercially available sealing members. In a preferred embodiment, the first sealing member **1185** is an o-ring with seal backups available from Parker Seals in order to optimally provide a dynamic seal.

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The second end **1180** of the force multiplier piston **535** preferably includes the first threaded portion **1190** and the second sealing member **1195**. The first threaded portion **1190** is preferably adapted to be removably coupled to the force multiplier sleeve **540**. The first threaded portion **1190** may include any number of conventional commercially available threaded portions. In a preferred embodiment, the first threaded portion **1190** is a stub acme thread available from Halliburton Energy Services in order to optimally provide high tensile strength. The second sealing member **1195** is preferably adapted to fluidically seal the interface between the second end **1180** of the force multiplier piston **535** and the force multiplier sleeve **540**. The second sealing member **1195** may include any number of conventional commercially available sealing members. In a preferred embodiment, the second sealing member **1195** is an o-ring sealing member available from Parker Seals in order to optimally provide a fluidic seal.

The force multiplier sleeve **540** is coupled to the force multiplier piston **535**. The force multiplier sleeve **540** is movably coupled to the first coupling **545**. The force multiplier sleeve **540** preferably has a substantially annular cross-section. The force multiplier sleeve **540** may be fabricated from any number of conventional commercially available materials. In a preferred embodiment, the force multiplier sleeve **540** is fabricated from alloy steel having a minimum yield strength ranging from about 75,000 to 140,000 psi in order to optimally provide high strength and resistance to abrasion and fluid erosion. In a preferred embodiment, the inner surface of the force multiplier sleeve **540** includes a nickel plating in order to provide an optimal dynamic seal with the outside surface of the first coupling **545**. In a preferred embodiment, the force multiplier sleeve **540** further includes a first end **1200**, a second end **1205**, and a first threaded portion **1210**.

The first end **1200** of the force multiplier sleeve **540** preferably includes the first threaded portion **1210**. The first threaded portion **1210** of the first end **1200** of the force multiplier sleeve **540** is preferably adapted to be removably coupled to the first threaded portion **1190** of the second end **1180** of the force multiplier piston **535**. The first threaded portion **1210** may comprise any number of conventional commercially available threaded portions. In a preferred embodiment, the first threaded portion **1210** is a stub acme thread available from Halliburton Energy Services in order to optimally provide high tensile strength.

The first coupling **545** is coupled to the force multiplier inner support member **530** and the third support member **550**. The first coupling **545** is movably coupled to the force multiplier sleeve **540**. The first coupling **545** preferably has a substantially annular cross-section. The first coupling **545** may be fabricated from any number of conventional commercially available materials. In a preferred embodiment, the first coupling **545** is fabricated from alloy steel having a minimum yield strength ranging from about 75,000 to 140,000 psi in order to optimally provide high strength and resistance to abrasion and fluid erosion. In a preferred embodiment, the first coupling **545** further includes the fourth passage **700**, a first end **1215**, a second end **1220**, a first inner sealing member **1225**, a first outer sealing member **1230**, a first threaded portion **1235**, a second inner sealing member **1240**, a second outer sealing member **1245**, and a second threaded portion **1250**.

The first end **1215** of the first coupling **545** preferably includes the first inner sealing member **1225**, the first outer sealing member **1230**, and the first threaded portion **1235**. The first inner sealing member **1225** is preferably adapted to

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fluidically seal the interface between the first end **1215** of the first coupling **545** and the second end **1160** of the force multiplier inner support member **530**. The first inner sealing member **1225** may include any number of conventional commercially available sealing members. In a preferred embodiment, the first inner sealing member **1225** is an o-ring seal available from Parker Seals in order to optimally provide a fluidic seal. The first outer sealing member **1230** is preferably adapted to prevent foreign materials from entering the interface between the first end **1215** of the first coupling **545** and the second end **1205** of the force multiplier sleeve **540**. The first outer sealing member **1230** is further preferably adapted to fluidically seal the interface between the first end **1215** of the first coupling **545** and the second end **1205** of the force multiplier sleeve **540**. The first outer sealing member **1230** may include any number of conventional commercially available sealing members. In a preferred embodiment, the first outer sealing member **1230** is a seal backup available from Parker Seals in order to optimally provide a barrier to foreign materials. The first threaded portion **1235** of the first end **1215** of the first coupling **545** is preferably adapted to be removably coupled to the second threaded portion **1170** of the second end **1160** of the force multiplier inner support member **530**. The first threaded portion **1235** may comprise any number of conventional commercially available threaded portions. In a preferred embodiment, the first threaded portion **1235** is a stub acme thread available from Halliburton Energy Services in order to optimally provide high tensile strength.

The second end **1220** of the first coupling **545** preferably includes the second inner sealing member **1240**, the second outer sealing member **1245**, and the second threaded portion **1250**. The second inner sealing member **1240** is preferably adapted to fluidically seal the interface between the second end **1220** of the first coupling **545** and the third support member **550**. The second inner sealing member **1240** may include any number of conventional commercially available sealing members. In a preferred embodiment, the second inner sealing member **1240** is an o-ring available from Parker Seals in order to optimally provide a fluidic seal. The second outer sealing member **1245** is preferably adapted to fluidically seal the dynamic interface between the second end **1220** of the first coupling **545** and the second end **1205** of the force multiplier sleeve **540**. The second outer sealing member **1245** may include any number of conventional commercially available sealing members. In a preferred embodiment, the second outer sealing member **1245** is an o-ring with seal backups available from Parker Seals in order to optimally provide a fluidic seal. The second threaded portion **1250** of the second end **1220** of the first coupling **545** is preferably adapted to be removably coupled to the third support member **550**. The second threaded portion **1250** may comprise any number of conventional commercially available threaded portions. In a preferred embodiment, the second threaded portion **1250** is a stub acme thread available from Halliburton Energy Services in order to optimally provide high tensile strength.

The third support member **550** is coupled to the first coupling **545** and the second coupling **605**. The third support member **550** is movably coupled to the spring spacer **555**, the preload spring **560**, the mandrel **580**, and the travel port sealing sleeve **600**. The third support member **550** preferably has a substantially annular cross-section. The third support member **550** may be fabricated from any number of conventional commercially available materials. In a preferred embodiment, the third support member **550** is fabricated from alloy steel having a minimum yield strength ranging

from about 75,000 to 140,000 psi in order to optimally provide high strength and resistance to abrasion and fluid erosion. In a preferred embodiment, the outer surface of the third support member 550 includes a nickel plating in order to provide an optimal dynamic seal with the inside surfaces of the mandrel 580 and the travel port sealing sleeve 600. In a preferred embodiment, the third support member 550 further includes a first end 1255, a second end 1260, a first threaded portion 1265, and a second threaded portion 1270.

The first end 1255 of the third support member 550 preferably includes the first threaded portion 1265 and the fourth passage 700. The first threaded portion 1265 of the first end 1255 of the third support member 550 is preferably adapted to be removably coupled to the second threaded portion 1250 of the second end 1220 of the first coupling 545. The first threaded portion 1265 may comprise any number of conventional commercially available threaded portions. In a preferred embodiment, the first threaded portion 1265 is a stub acme thread available from Halliburton Energy Services in order to optimally provide high tensile strength.

The second end 1260 of the third support member 550 preferably includes the second threaded portion 1270 and the fourth passage 700, and the expansion cone travel indicator ports 740. The second threaded portion 1270 of the second end 1260 of the third support member 550 is preferably adapted to be removably coupled to the second coupling 605. The second threaded portion 1270 may comprise any number of conventional commercially available threaded portions. In a preferred embodiment, the second threaded portion 1270 is a stub acme thread available from Halliburton Energy Services in order to optimally provide high tensile strength.

The spring spacer 555 is coupled to the preload spring 560. The spring spacer 555 is movably coupled to the third support member 550. The spring spacer 555 preferably has a substantially annular cross-section. The spring spacer 555 may be fabricated from any number of conventional commercially available materials. In a preferred embodiment, the spring spacer 555 is fabricated from alloy steel having a minimum yield strength ranging from about 75,000 to 140,000 psi in order to optimally provide high strength and resistance to abrasion and fluid erosion.

The preload spring 560 is coupled to the spring spacer 555. The preload spring 560 is movably coupled to the third support member 550. The preload spring 560 may be fabricated from any number of conventional commercially available materials. In a preferred embodiment, the preload spring 560 is fabricated from alloys of chromium-vanadium or chromium-silicon in order to optimally provide a high preload force for sealing the interface between the expansion cone 585 and the liner hanger 595. In a preferred embodiment, the preload spring 560 has a spring rate ranging from about 500 to 2000 lbf/in in order to optimally provide a preload force.

The lubrication fitting 565 is coupled to the lubrication packer sleeve 570, the body of lubricant 575 and the mandrel 580. The lubrication fitting 565 preferably has a substantially annular cross-section. The lubrication fitting 565 may be fabricated from any number of conventional commercially available materials. In a preferred embodiment, the lubrication fitting 565 is fabricated from alloy steel having a minimum yield strength ranging from about 75,000 to 140,000 psi in order to optimally provide high strength and resistance to abrasion and fluid erosion. The lubrication fitting 565 preferably includes a first end 1275, a second end

1280, a lubrication injection fitting 1285, a first threaded portion 1290, and the first lubrication supply passage 795.

The first end 1275 of the lubrication fitting 565 preferably includes the lubrication injection fitting 1285, the first threaded portion 1290 and the first lubrication supply passage 795. The lubrication injection fitting 1285 is preferably adapted to permit lubricants to be injected into the first lubrication supply passage 795. The lubrication injection fitting 1285 may comprise any number of conventional commercially available injection fittings. In a preferred embodiment, the lubrication injection fitting 1285 is a model 1641-B grease fitting available from Alemite Corp. in order to optimally provide a connection for injecting lubricants. The first threaded portion 1290 of the first end 1275 of the lubrication fitting 565 is preferably adapted to be removably coupled to the mandrel 580. The first threaded portion 1290 may comprise any number of conventional commercially available threaded portions. In a preferred embodiment, the first threaded portion 1290 is a stub acme thread available from Halliburton Energy Services. The second end 1280 of the lubrication fitting 565 is preferably spaced above the outside surface of the mandrel 580 in order to define a portion of the first lubrication supply passage 795.

The lubrication packer sleeve 570 is coupled to the lubrication fitting 565 and the body of lubricant 575. The lubrication packer sleeve 570 is movably coupled to the liner hanger 595. The lubrication packer sleeve 570 is preferably adapted to fluidically seal the radial gap between the outside surface of the second end 1280 of the lubrication fitting 565 and the inside surface of the liner hanger 595. The lubrication packer sleeve 570 is further preferably adapted to compress the body of lubricant 575. In this manner, the lubricants within the body of lubricant 575 are optimally pumped to outer surface of the expansion cone 585.

The lubrication packer sleeve 570 may comprise any number of conventional commercially available packer sleeves. In a preferred embodiment, the lubrication packer sleeve 570 is a 70 durometer packer available from Halliburton Energy Services in order to optimally provide a low pressure fluidic seal.

The body of lubricant 575 is fluidically coupled to the first lubrication supply passage 795 and the second lubrication supply passage 800. The body of lubricant 575 is movably coupled to the lubrication fitting 565, the lubrication packer sleeve 570, the mandrel 580, the expansion cone 585 and the liner hanger 595. The body of lubricant 575 preferably provides a supply of lubricant for lubricating the dynamic interface between the outside surface of the expansion cone 585 and the inside surface of the liner hanger 595. The body of lubricant 575 may include any number of conventional commercially available lubricants. In a preferred embodiment, the body of lubricant 575 includes anti-seize 1500 available from Climax Lubricants and Equipment Co. in order to optimally provide high pressure lubrication.

In a preferred embodiment, during operation of the apparatus 500, the body of lubricant 575 lubricates the interface between the interior surface of the expanded portion of the liner hanger 595 and the exterior surface of the expansion cone 585. In this manner, when the expansion cone 585 is removed from the interior of the radially expanded liner hanger 595, the body of lubricant 575 lubricates the dynamic interfaces between the interior surface of the expanded portion of the liner hanger 595 and the exterior surface of the expansion cone 585. Thus, the body of lubricant 575 optimally reduces the force required to remove the expansion cone 585 from the radially expanded liner hanger 595.

The mandrel **580** is coupled to the lubrication fitting **565**, the expansion cone **585**, and the centralizer **590**. The mandrel **580** is movably coupled to the third support member **550**, the body of lubricant **575**, and the liner hanger **595**. The mandrel **580** preferably has a substantially annular cross-section. The mandrel **580** may be fabricated from any number of conventional commercially available materials. In a preferred embodiment, the mandrel **580** is fabricated from alloy steel having a minimum yield strength ranging from about 75,000 to 140,000 psi in order to optimally provide high strength and resistance to abrasion and fluid erosion. In a preferred embodiment, the mandrel **580** further includes a first end **1295**, an intermediate portion **1300**, second end **1305**, a first threaded portion **1310**, a first sealing member **1315**, a second sealing member **1320**, and a second threaded portion **1325**, a first wear ring **1326**, and a second wear ring **1327**.

The first end **1295** of the mandrel **580** preferably includes the first threaded portion **1310**, the first sealing member **1315**, and the first wear ring **1326**. The first threaded portion **1310** is preferably adapted to be removably coupled to the first threaded portion **1290** of the first end **1275** of the lubrication fitting **565**. The first threaded portion **1310** may comprise any number of conventional commercially available threaded portions. In a preferred embodiment, the first threaded portion **1310** is a stub acme thread available from Halliburton Energy Services in order to optimally provide high tensile strength. The first sealing member **1315** is preferably adapted to fluidically seal the dynamic interface between the inside surface of the first end **1295** of the mandrel **580** and the outside surface of the third support member **550**. The first sealing member **1315** may comprise any number of conventional commercially available sealing members. In a preferred embodiment, the first sealing member **1315** is an o-ring with seal backups available from Parker Seals in order to optimally provide a dynamic fluidic seal. The first wear ring **1326** is preferably positioned within an interior groove formed in the first end **1295** of the mandrel **580**. The first wear ring **1326** is preferably adapted to maintain concentricity between and among the mandrel **580** and the third support member **550** during axial displacement of the mandrel **580**, reduce frictional forces, and support side loads. In a preferred embodiment, the first wear ring **1326** is a model GR2C wear ring available from Busak & Shamban.

The outside diameter of the intermediate portion **1300** of the mandrel **580** is preferably about 0.05 to 0.25 inches less than the inside diameter of the liner hanger **595**. In this manner, the second lubrication supply passage **800** is defined by the radial gap between the intermediate portion **1300** of the mandrel **580** and the liner hanger **595**.

The second end **1305** of the mandrel **580** preferably includes the second sealing member **1320**, the second threaded portion **1325**, and the second wear ring **1327**. The second sealing member **1320** is preferably adapted to fluidically seal the interface between the inside surface of the expansion cone **585** and the outside surface of the mandrel **580**. The second sealing member **1320** may comprise any number of conventional commercially available sealing members. In a preferred embodiment, the second sealing member **1320** is an o-ring sealing member available from Parker Seals in order to optimally provide a fluidic seal. The second threaded portion **1325** is preferably adapted to be removably coupled to the centralizer **590**. The second threaded portion **1325** may comprise any number of conventional commercially available threaded portions. In a preferred embodiment, the second threaded portion **1325** is

a stub acme thread available from Halliburton Energy Services in order to optimally provide high tensile strength. The second wear ring **1327** is preferably positioned within an interior groove formed in the second end **1305** of the mandrel **580**. The second wear ring **1327** is preferably adapted to maintain concentricity between and among the mandrel **580** and the third support member **550** during axial displacement of the mandrel **580**, reduce frictional forces, and support side loads. In a preferred embodiment, the second wear ring **1327** is a model GR2C wear ring available from Busak & Shamban.

The expansion cone **585** is coupled to the mandrel **580** and the centralizer **590**. The expansion cone **585** is fluidically coupled to the second lubrication supply passage **800**. The expansion cone **585** is movably coupled to the body of lubricant **575** and the liner hanger **595**. The expansion cone **585** preferably includes a substantially annular cross-section. The expansion cone **585** may be fabricated from any number of conventional commercially available materials. In a preferred embodiment, the expansion cone **585** is fabricated from cold worked tool steel in order to optimally provide high strength and wear resistance.

In a preferred embodiment, the expansion cone **585** is further provided substantially as described in one or more of the following: (1) U.S. patent application Ser. No. 09/440,338, filed on Nov. 15, 1999, which issued as U.S. Pat. No. 6,328,113, which claimed benefit of the filing date of U.S. Provisional Patent Application Ser. No. 60/108,558, filed on Nov. 16, 1998, (2) U.S. patent application Ser. No. 09/454,139, filed on Dec. 3, 1999, which claimed benefit of the filing date of U.S. Provisional Patent Application Ser. No. 60/111,293, filed on Dec. 7, 1998, (3) U.S. patent application Ser. No. 09/502,350, filed on Feb. 10, 2000, which claimed the benefit of the filing date of U.S. Provisional Patent Application Ser. No. 60/119,611, filed Feb. 11, 1999, (4) U.S. patent application Ser. No. 09/510,913, filed on Feb. 23, 2000, which claimed the benefit of the filing date of U.S. Provisional Patent Application Ser. No. 60/121,702, filed on Feb. 25, 1999, (5) U.S. patent application Ser. No. 09/511,941, filed on Feb. 24, 2000, which claimed the benefit of the filing date of U.S. Provisional Patent Application No. 60/121,907, filed Feb. 26, 1999, (6) U.S. Provisional Patent Application Ser. No. 60/124,042, filed on Mar. 11, 1999, (7) U.S. Provisional Patent Application Ser. No. 60/131,106, filed on Apr. 26, 1999, (8) U.S. Provisional Patent Application Ser. No. 60/137,998, filed on Jun. 7, 1999, (9) U.S. Provisional Patent Application Ser. No. 60/143,039, filed on Jul. 9, 1999, and (10) U.S. Provisional Patent Application Ser. No. 60/146,203, filed on Jul. 29, 1999, the disclosures of which are incorporated by reference.

The centralizer **590** is coupled to the mandrel **580** and the expansion cone **585**. The centralizer **590** is movably coupled to the liner hanger **595**. The centralizer **590** preferably includes a substantially annular cross-section. The centralizer **590** may be fabricated from any number of conventional commercially available materials. In a preferred embodiment, the centralizer **590** is fabricated from alloy steel having a minimum yield strength ranging from about 75,000 to 140,000 in order to optimally provide high strength and resistance to abrasion and fluid erosion. The centralizer **590** preferably includes a first end **1330**, a second end **1335**, a plurality of centralizer fins **1340**, and a threaded portion **1345**.

The second end **1335** of the centralizer **590** preferably includes the centralizer fins **1340** and the threaded portion **1345**. The centralizer fins **1340** preferably extend from the second end **1335** of the centralizer **590** in a substantially

radial direction. In a preferred embodiment, the radial gap between the centralizer fins **1340** and the inside surface of the liner hanger **595** is less than about 0.06 inches in order to optimally provide centralization of the expansion cone **585**. The threaded portion **1345** is preferably adapted to be removably coupled to the second threaded portion **1325** of the second end **1305** of the mandrel **580**. The threaded portion **1345** may comprise any number of conventional commercially available threaded portions. In a preferred embodiment, the threaded portion **1345** is a stub acme thread in order to optimally provide high tensile strength.

The liner hanger **595** is coupled to the outer collet support member **645** and the set screws **660**. The liner hanger **595** is movably coupled to the lubrication packer sleeve **570**, the body of lubricant **575**, the expansion cone **585**, and the centralizer **590**. The liner hanger **595** preferably has a substantially annular cross-section. The liner hanger **595** preferably includes a plurality of tubular members coupled end to end. The axial length of the liner hanger **595** preferably ranges from about 5 to 12 feet. The liner hanger **595** may be fabricated from any number of conventional commercially available materials. In a preferred embodiment, the liner hanger **595** is fabricated from alloy steel having a minimum yield strength ranging from about 40,000 to 125,000 psi in order to optimally provide high strength and ductility. The liner hanger **595** preferably includes a first end **1350**, an intermediate portion **1355**, a second end **1360**, a sealing member **1365**, a threaded portion **1370**, one or more set screw mounting holes **1375**, and one or more outside sealing portions **1380**.

The outside diameter of the first end **1350** of the liner hanger **595** is preferably selected to permit the liner hanger **595** and apparatus **500** to be inserted into another opening or tubular member. In a preferred embodiment, the outside diameter of the first end **1350** of the liner hanger **595** is selected to be about 0.12 to 2 inches less than the inside diameter of the opening or tubular member that the liner hanger **595** will be inserted into. In a preferred embodiment, the axial length of the first end **1350** of the liner hanger **595** ranges from about 8 to 20 inches.

The outside diameter of the intermediate portion **1355** of the liner hanger **595** preferably provides a transition from the first end **1350** to the second end **1360** of the liner hanger. In a preferred embodiment, the axial length of the intermediate portion **1355** of the liner hanger **595** ranges from about 0.25 to 2 inches in order to optimally provide reduced radial expansion pressures.

The second end **1360** of the liner hanger **595** includes the sealing member **1365**, the threaded portion **1370**, the set screw mounting holes **1375** and the outside sealing portions **1380**. The outside diameter of the second end **1360** of the liner hanger **595** is preferably about 0.10 to 2.00 inches less than the outside diameter of the first end **1350** of the liner hanger **595** in order to optimally provide reduced radial expansion pressures. The sealing member **1365** is preferably adapted to fluidically seal the interface between the second end **1360** of the liner hanger and the outer collet support member **645**. The sealing member **1365** may comprise any number of conventional commercially available sealing members. In a preferred embodiment, the sealing member **1365** is an o-ring seal available from Parker Seals in order to optimally provide a fluidic seal. The threaded portion **1370** is preferably adapted to be removably coupled to the outer collet support member **645**. The threaded portion **1370** may comprise any number of conventional commercially available threaded portions. In a preferred embodiment, the threaded portion **1370** is a stub acme thread available from

Halliburton Energy Services in order to optimally provide high tensile strength. The set screw mounting holes **1375** are preferably adapted to receive the set screws **660**. Each outside sealing portion **1380** preferably includes a top ring **1385**, an intermediate sealing member **1395**, and a lower ring **1390**. The top and bottom rings, **1385** and **1390**, are preferably adapted to penetrate the inside surface of a wellbore casing. The top and bottom rings, **1385** and **1390**, preferably extend from the outside surface of the second end **1360** of the liner hanger **595**. In a preferred embodiment, the outside diameter of the top and bottom rings, **1385** and **1390**, are less than or equal to the outside diameter of the first end **1350** of the liner hanger **595** in order to optimally provide protection from abrasion when placing the apparatus **500** within a wellbore casing or other tubular member. In a preferred embodiment, the top and bottom rings, **1385** and **1390** are fabricated from alloy steel having a minimum yield strength of about 40,000 to 125,000 psi in order to optimally provide high strength and ductility. In a preferred embodiment, the top and bottom rings, **1385** and **1390**, are integrally formed with the liner hanger **595**. The intermediate sealing member **1395** is preferably adapted to seal the interface between the outside surface of the second end **1360** of the liner hanger **595** and the inside surface of a wellbore casing. The intermediate sealing member **1395** may comprise any number of conventional sealing members. In a preferred embodiment, the intermediate sealing member **1395** is a 50 to 90 durometer nitrile elastomeric sealing member available from Eutsler Technical Products in order to optimally provide a fluidic seal and shear strength.

The liner hanger **595** is further preferably provided substantially as described in one or more of the following: (1) U.S. patent application Ser. No. 09/440,338, filed on Nov. 15, 1999, which issued as U.S. Pat. No. 6,328,113, which claimed benefit of the filing date of U.S. Provisional Patent Application Ser. No. 60/108,558, filed on Nov. 16, 1998, (2) U.S. patent application Ser. No. 09/454,139, filed on Dec. 3, 1999, which claimed benefit of the filing date of U.S. Provisional Patent Application Ser. No. 60/111,293, filed on Dec. 7, 1998, (3) U.S. patent application Ser. No. 09/502,350, filed on Feb. 10, 2000, which claimed the benefit of the filing date of U.S. Provisional Patent Application Ser. No. 60/119,611, filed Feb. 11, 1999, (4) U.S. patent application Ser. No. 09/510,913, filed on Feb. 23, 2000, which claimed the benefit of the filing date of U.S. Provisional Patent Application Ser. No. 60/121,702, filed on Feb. 25, 1999, (5) U.S. patent application Ser. No. 09/511,941, filed on Feb. 24, 2000, which claimed the benefit of the filing date of U.S. Provisional Patent Application No. 60/121,907, filed Feb. 26, 1999, (6) U.S. Provisional Patent Application Ser. No. 60/124,042, filed on Mar. 11, 1999, (7) U.S. Provisional Patent Application Ser. No. 60/131,106, filed on Apr. 26, 1999, (8) U.S. Provisional Patent Application Ser. No. 60/137,998, filed on Jun. 7, 1999, (9) U.S. Provisional Patent Application Ser. No. 60/143,039, filed on Jul. 9, 1999, and (10) U.S. Provisional Patent Application Ser. No. 60/146,203, filed on Jul. 29, 1999, the disclosures of which are incorporated by reference.

The travel port sealing sleeve **600** is movably coupled to the third support member **550**. The travel port sealing sleeve **600** is further initially positioned over the expansion cone travel indicator ports **740**. The travel port sealing sleeve **600** preferably has a substantially annular cross-section. The travel port sealing sleeve **600** may be fabricated from any number of conventional commercially available materials. In a preferred embodiment, the travel port sealing sleeve **600** is fabricated from alloy steel having a minimum yield

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strength of about 75,000 to 140,000 psi in order to optimally provide high strength and resistance to abrasion and fluid erosion. The travel port sealing sleeve preferably includes a plurality of inner sealing members 1400. The inner sealing members 1400 are preferably adapted to seal the dynamic interface between the inside surface of the travel port sealing sleeve 600 and the outside surface of the third support member 550. The inner sealing members 1400 may comprise any number of conventional commercially available sealing members. In a preferred embodiment, the inner sealing members 1400 are o-rings available from Parker Seals in order to optimally provide a fluidic seal. In a preferred embodiment, the inner sealing members 1400 further provide sufficient frictional force to prevent inadvertent movement of the travel port sealing sleeve 600. In an alternative embodiment, the travel port sealing sleeve 600 is removably coupled to the third support member 550 by one or more shear pins. In this manner, accidental movement of the travel port sealing sleeve 600 is prevented.

The second coupling 605 is coupled to the third support member 550 and the collet mandrel 610. The second coupling 605 preferably has a substantially annular cross-section. The second coupling 605 may be fabricated from any number of conventional commercially available materials. In a preferred embodiment, the second coupling 605 is fabricated from alloy steel having a minimum yield strength of about 75,000 to 140,000 psi in order to optimally provide high strength and resistance to abrasion and fluid erosion. In a preferred embodiment, the second coupling 605 further includes the fourth passage 700, a first end 1405, a second end 1410, a first inner sealing member 1415, a first threaded portion 1420, a second inner sealing member 1425, and a second threaded portion 1430.

The first end 1405 of the second coupling 605 preferably includes the first inner sealing member 1415 and the first threaded portion 1420. The first inner sealing member 1415 is preferably adapted to fluidically seal the interface between the first end 1405 of the second coupling 605 and the second end 1260 of the third support member 550. The first inner sealing member 1415 may include any number of conventional commercially available sealing members. In a preferred embodiment, the first inner sealing member 1415 is an o-ring available from Parker Seals in order to optimally provide a fluidic seal. The first threaded portion 1420 of the first end 1415 of the second coupling 605 is preferably adapted to be removably coupled to the second threaded portion 1270 of the second end 1260 of the third support member 550. The first threaded portion 1420 may comprise any number of conventional commercially available threaded portions. In a preferred embodiment, the first threaded portion 1420 is a stub acme thread available from Halliburton Energy Services in order to optimally provide high tensile strength.

The second end 1410 of the second coupling 605 preferably includes the second inner sealing member 1425 and the second threaded portion 1430. The second inner sealing member 1425 is preferably adapted to fluidically seal the interface between the second end 1410 of the second coupling 605 and the collet mandrel 610. The second inner sealing member 1425 may include any number of conventional commercially available sealing members. In a preferred embodiment, the second inner sealing member 1425 is an o-ring available from Parker Seals in order to optimally provide a fluidic seal. The second threaded portion 1430 of the second end 1410 of the second coupling 605 is preferably adapted to be removably coupled to the collet mandrel 610. The second threaded portion 1430 may comprise any

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number of conventional commercially available threaded portions. In a preferred embodiment, the second threaded portion 1430 is a stub acme thread available from Halliburton Energy Services in order to optimally provide high tensile strength.

The collet mandrel 610 is coupled to the second coupling 605, the collet retaining adapter 640, and the collet retaining sleeve shear pins 665. The collet mandrel 610 is releasably coupled to the locking dogs 620, the collet assembly 625, and the collet retaining sleeve 635. The collet mandrel 610 preferably has a substantially annular cross-section. The collet mandrel 610 may be fabricated from any number of conventional commercially available materials. In a preferred embodiment, the collet mandrel 610 is fabricated from alloy steel having a minimum yield strength of about 75,000 to 140,000 psi in order to optimally provide high strength and resistance to abrasion and fluid erosion. In a preferred embodiment, the collet mandrel 610 further includes the fourth passage 700, the collet release ports 745, the collet release throat passage 755, the fifth passage 760, a first end 1435, a second end 1440, a first shoulder 1445, a second shoulder 1450, a recess 1455, a shear pin mounting hole 1460, a first threaded portion 1465, a second threaded portion 1470, and a sealing member 1475.

The first end 1435 of the collet mandrel 610 preferably includes the fourth passage 700, the first shoulder 1445, and the first threaded portion 1465. The first threaded portion 1465 is preferably adapted to be removably coupled to the second threaded portion 1430 of the second end 1410 of the second coupling 605. The first threaded portion 1465 may include any number of conventional threaded portions. In a preferred embodiment, the first threaded portion 1465 is a stub acme thread available from Halliburton Energy Services in order to optimally provide high tensile strength.

The second end 1440 of the collet mandrel 610 preferably includes the fourth passage 700, the collet release ports 745, the collet release throat passage 755, the fifth passage 760, the second shoulder 1450, the recess 1455, the shear pin mounting hole 1460, the second threaded portion 1470, and the sealing member 1475. The second shoulder 1450 is preferably adapted to mate with and provide a reference position for the collet retaining sleeve 635. The recess 1455 is preferably adapted to define a portion of the collet sleeve release chamber 805. The shear pin mounting hole 1460 is preferably adapted to receive the collet retaining sleeve shear pins 665. The second threaded portion 1470 is preferably adapted to be removably coupled to the collet retaining adapter 640. The second threaded portion 1470 may include any number of conventional commercially available threaded portions. In a preferred embodiment, the second threaded portions 1470 is a stub acme thread available from Halliburton Energy Services in order to optimally provide high tensile strength. The sealing member 1475 is preferably adapted to seal the dynamic interface between the outside surface of the collet mandrel 610 and the inside surface of the collet retaining sleeve 635. The sealing member 1475 may include any number of conventional commercially available sealing members. In a preferred embodiment, the sealing member 1475 is an o-ring available from Parker Seals in order to optimally provide a fluidic seal.

The load transfer sleeve 615 is movably coupled to the collet mandrel 610, the collet assembly 625, and the outer collet support member 645. The load transfer sleeve 615 preferably has a substantially annular cross-section. The load transfer sleeve 615 may be fabricated from any number of conventional commercially available materials. In a preferred embodiment, the load transfer sleeve 615 is fabricated

from alloy steel having a minimum yield strength of about 75,000 to 140,000 psi in order to optimally provide high strength and resistance to abrasion and fluid erosion. In a preferred embodiment, the load transfer sleeve 615 further a first end 1480 and a second end 1485.

The inside diameter of the first end 1480 of the load transfer sleeve 615 is preferably greater than the outside diameter of the collet mandrel 610 and less than the outside diameters of the second coupling 605 and the locking dog retainer 622. In this manner, during operation of the apparatus 500, the load transfer sleeve 615 optimally permits the flow of fluidic materials from the second annular chamber 735 to the third annular chamber 750. Furthermore, in this manner, during operation of the apparatus 200, the load transfer sleeve 615 optimally limits downward movement of the second coupling 605 relative to the collet assembly 625.

The second end 1485 of the load transfer sleeve 615 is preferably adapted to cooperatively interact with the collet 625. In this manner, during operation of the apparatus 200, the load transfer sleeve 615 optimally limits downward movement of the second coupling 605 relative to the collet assembly 625.

The locking dogs 620 are coupled to the locking dog retainer 622 and the collet assembly 625. The locking dogs 620 are releasably coupled to the collet mandrel 610. The locking dogs 620 are preferably adapted to lock onto the outside surface of the collet mandrel 610 when the collet mandrel 610 is displaced in the downward direction relative to the locking dogs 620. The locking dogs 620 may comprise any number of conventional commercially available locking dogs. In a preferred embodiment, the locking dogs 620 include a plurality of locking dog elements 1490 and a plurality of locking dog springs 1495.

In a preferred embodiment, each of the locking dog elements 1490 include an arcuate segment including a pair of external grooves for receiving the locking dog springs 1495. In a preferred embodiment, each of the locking dog springs 1495 are garter springs. During operation of the apparatus 500, the locking dog elements 1490 are preferably radially inwardly displaced by the locking dog springs 1495 when the locking dogs 620 are relatively axially displaced past the first shoulder 1445 of the collet mandrel 610. As a result, the locking dogs 620 are then engaged by the first shoulder 1445 of the collet mandrel 610.

The locking dog retainer 622 is coupled to the locking dogs 620 and the collet assembly 625. The locking dog retainer 622 preferably has a substantially annular cross-section. The locking dog retainer 622 may be fabricated from any number of conventional commercially available materials. In a preferred embodiment, the locking dog retainer 622 is fabricated from alloy steel having a minimum yield strength of about 75,000 to 140,000 psi in order to optimally provide high strength and resistance to abrasion and fluid erosion. In a preferred embodiment, the locking dog retainer 622 further includes a first end 1500, a second end 1505, and a threaded portion 1510.

The first end 1500 of the locking dog retainer 622 is preferably adapted to capture the locking dogs 620. In this manner, when the locking dogs 620 latch onto the first shoulder 1445 of the collet mandrel 610, the locking dog retainer 622 transmits the axial force to the collet assembly 625.

The second end 1505 of the locking dog retainer preferably includes the threaded portion 1510. The threaded portion 1510 is preferably adapted to be removably coupled to the collet assembly 625. The threaded portion 1510 may

comprise any number of conventional commercially available threaded portions. In a preferred embodiment, the threaded portions 1510 is a stub acme thread available from Halliburton Energy Services in order to optimally provide high tensile strength.

The collet assembly 625 is coupled to the locking dogs 620 and the locking dog retainer 622. The collet assembly 625 is releasably coupled to the collet mandrel 610, the outer collet support member 645, the collet retaining sleeve 635, the load transfer sleeve 615, and the collet retaining adapter 640.

The collet assembly 625 preferably has a substantially annular cross-section. The collet assembly 625 may be fabricated from any number of conventional commercially available materials. In a preferred embodiment, the collet assembly 625 is fabricated from alloy steel having a minimum yield strength of about 75,000 to 140,000 psi in order to optimally provide high strength and resistance to abrasion and fluid erosion. In a preferred embodiment, the collet assembly 625 includes a collet body 1515, a plurality of collet arms 1520, a plurality of collet upsets 1525, flow passages 1530, and a threaded portion 1535.

The collet body 1515 preferably includes the flow passages 1530 and the threaded portion 1535. The flow passages 1530 are preferably adapted to convey fluidic materials between the second annular chamber 735 and the third annular chamber 750. The threaded portion 1535 is preferably adapted to be removably coupled to the threaded portion 1510 of the second end 1505 of the locking dog retainer 622. The threaded portion 1535 may include any number of conventional commercially available threaded portions. In a preferred embodiment, the threaded portion 1535 is a stub acme thread available from Halliburton Energy Services in order to optimally provide high tensile strength.

The collet arms 1520 extend from the collet body 1515 in a substantially axial direction. The collet upsets 1525 extend from the ends of corresponding collet arms 1520 in a substantially radial direction. The collet upsets 1525 are preferably adapted to mate with and cooperatively interact with corresponding slots provided in the collet retaining adapter 640 and the liner hanger setting sleeve 650. In this manner, the collet upsets 1525 preferably controllably couple the collet retaining adapter 640 to the outer collet support member 645 and the liner hanger setting sleeve 650. In this manner, axial and radial forces are optimally coupled between the collet retaining adapter 640, the outer collet support member 645 and the liner hanger setting sleeve 650. The collet upsets 1525 preferably include a flat outer surface 1540 and an angled outer surface 1545. In this manner, the collet upsets 1525 are optimally adapted to be removably coupled to the slots provided in the collet retaining adapter 640 and the liner hanger setting sleeve 650.

The collet retaining sleeve 635 is coupled to the collet retaining sleeve shear pins 665. The collet retaining sleeve 635 is movably coupled to the collet mandrel 610 and the collet assembly 625. The collet retaining sleeve 635 preferably has a substantially annular cross-section. The collet retaining sleeve 635 may be fabricated from any number of conventional commercially available materials. In a preferred embodiment, the collet retaining sleeve 635 is fabricated from alloy steel having a minimum yield strength of about 75,000 to 140,000 psi in order to optimally provide high strength and resistance to abrasion and fluid erosion. In a preferred embodiment, the collet retaining sleeve 635 includes the collet sleeve passages 775, a first end 1550, a

second end **1555**, one or more shear pin mounting holes **1560**, a first shoulder **1570**, a second shoulder **1575**, and a sealing member **1580**.

The first end **1550** of the collet retaining sleeve **635** preferably includes the collet sleeve passages **775**, the shear pin mounting holes **1560**, and the first shoulder **1570**. The collet sleeve passages **775** are preferably adapted to convey fluidic materials between the second annular chamber **735** and the third annular chamber **750**. The shear pin mounting holes **1560** are preferable adapted to receive corresponding shear pins **665**. The first shoulder **1570** is preferably adapted to mate with the second shoulder **1450** of the collet mandrel **610**.

The second end **1555** of the collet retaining sleeve **635** preferably includes the collet sleeve passages **775**, the second shoulder **1575**, and the sealing member **1580**. The collet sleeve passages **775** are preferably adapted to convey fluidic materials between the second annular chamber **735** and the third annular chamber **750**. The second shoulder **1575** of the second end **1555** of the collet retaining sleeve **635** and the recess **1455** of the second end **1440** of the collet mandrel **610** are preferably adapted to define the collet sleeve release chamber **805**. The sealing member **1580** is preferably adapted to seal the dynamic interface between the outer surface of the collet mandrel **610** and the inside surface of the collet retaining sleeve **635**. The sealing member **1580** may include any number of conventional commercially available sealing members. In a preferred embodiment, the sealing member **1580** is an o-ring available from Parker Seals in order to optimally provide a fluidic seal.

The collet retaining adapter **640** is coupled to the collet mandrel **610**. The collet retaining adapter **640** is movably coupled to the liner hanger setting sleeve **650**, the collet retaining sleeve **635**, and the collet assembly **625**. The collet retaining adapter **640** preferably has a substantially annular cross-section. The collet retaining adapter **640** may be fabricated from any number of conventional commercially available materials. In a preferred embodiment, the collet retaining adapter **640** is fabricated from alloy steel having a minimum yield strength of about 75,000 to 140,000 psi in order to optimally provide high strength and resistance to abrasion and fluid erosion. In a preferred embodiment, the collet retaining adapter **640** includes the fifth passage **760**, the sixth passages **765**, a first end **1585**, an intermediate portion **1590**, a second end **1595**, a plurality of collet slots **1600**, a sealing member **1605**, a first threaded portion **1610**, and a second threaded portion **1615**.

The first end **1585** of the collet retaining adapter **640** preferably includes the collet slots **1600**. The collet slots **1600** are preferably adapted to cooperatively interact with and mate with the collet upsets **1525**. The collet slots **1600** are further preferably adapted to be substantially aligned with corresponding collet slots provided in the liner hanger setting sleeve **650**. In this manner, the slots provided in the collet retaining adapter **640** and the liner hanger setting sleeve **650** are removably coupled to the collet upsets **1525**.

The intermediate portion **1590** of the collet retaining adapter **640** preferably includes the sixth passages **765**, the sealing member **1605**, and the first threaded portion **1610**. The sealing member **1605** is preferably adapted to fluidically seal the interface between the outside surface of the collet retaining adapter **640** and the inside surface of the liner hanger setting sleeve **650**. The sealing member **1605** may include any number of conventional commercially available sealing members. In a preferred embodiment, the sealing member **1605** is an o-ring available from Parker Seals in

order to optimally provide a fluidic seal. The first threaded portion **1610** is preferably adapted to be removably coupled to the second threaded portion **1470** of the second end **1440** of the collet mandrel **610**. The first threaded portion **1610** may include any number of conventional commercially available threaded portions. In a preferred embodiment, the first threaded portion **1610** is a stub acme thread available from Halliburton Energy Services in order to optimally provide high tensile strength.

The second end **1595** of the collet retaining adapter **640** preferably includes the fifth passage **760** and the second threaded portion **1615**. The second threaded portion **1615** is preferably adapted to be removably coupled to a conventional SSR plug set, or other similar device.

The outer collet support member **645** is coupled to the liner hanger **595**, the set screws **660**, and the liner hanger setting sleeve **650**. The outer collet support member **645** is releasably coupled to the collet assembly **625**. The outer collet support member **645** is movably coupled to the load transfer sleeve **615**. The outer collet support member **645** preferably has a substantially annular cross-section. The outer collet support member **645** may be fabricated from any number of conventional commercially available materials. In a preferred embodiment, the outer collet support member **645** is fabricated from alloy steel having a minimum yield strength of about 75,000 to 140,000 psi in order to optimally provide high strength and resistance to abrasion and fluid erosion. In a preferred embodiment, the outer collet support member **645** includes a first end **1620**, a second end **1625**, a first threaded portion **1630**, set screw mounting holes **1635**, a recess **1640**, and a second threaded portion **1645**.

The first end **1620** of the outer collet support member **645** preferably includes the first threaded portion **1630** and the set screw mounting holes **1635**. The first threaded portion **1630** is preferably adapted to be removably coupled to the threaded portion **1370** of the second end **1360** of the liner hanger **595**. The first threaded portion **1630** may include any number of conventional commercially available threaded portions. In a preferred embodiment, the first threaded portion **1630** is a stub acme thread available from Halliburton Energy Services in order to optimally provide high tensile strength. The set screw mounting holes **1635** are preferably adapted to receive corresponding set screws **660**.

The second end **1625** of the outer collet support member **645** preferably includes the recess **1640** and the second threaded portion **1645**. The recess **1640** is preferably adapted to receive a portion of the end of the liner hanger setting sleeve **650**. In this manner, the second end **1625** of the outer collet support member **645** overlaps with a portion of the end of the liner hanger setting sleeve **650**. The second threaded portion **1645** is preferably adapted to be removably coupled to the liner hanger setting sleeve **650**. The second threaded portion **1645** may include any number of conventional commercially available threaded portions. In a preferred embodiment, the second threaded portion **1645** is a stub acme thread available from Halliburton Energy Services in order to optimally provide high tensile strength.

The liner hanger setting sleeve **650** is coupled to the outer collet support member **645**. The liner hanger setting sleeve **650** is releasably coupled to the collet assembly **625**. The liner hanger setting sleeve **650** is movably coupled to the collet retaining adapter **640**. The liner hanger setting sleeve **650** preferably has a substantially annular cross-section. The liner hanger setting sleeve **650** may be fabricated from any number of conventional commercially available materials. In a preferred embodiment, the liner hanger setting sleeve

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650 is fabricated from alloy steel having a minimum yield strength of about 75,000 to 140,000 psi in order to optimally provide high strength and resistance to abrasion and fluid erosion. In a preferred embodiment, the liner hanger setting sleeve 650 includes a first end 1650, a second end 1655, a recessed portion 1660, a plurality of collet slots 1665, a threaded portion 1670, an interior shoulder 1672, and a threaded portion 1673.

The first end 1650 of the liner hanger setting sleeve 650 preferably includes the recessed portion 1660, the plurality of collet slots 1665 and the threaded portion 1670. The recessed portion 1660 of the first end 1650 of the liner hanger setting sleeve 650 is preferably adapted to mate with the recessed portion 1640 of the second end 1625 of the outer collet support member 645. In this manner, the first end 1650 of the liner hanger setting sleeve 650 overlaps and mates with the second end 1625 of the outer collet support member 645. The recessed portion 1660 of the first end 1650 of the liner hanger setting sleeve 650 further includes the plurality of collet slots 1665. The collet slots 1665 are preferably adapted to mate with and cooperatively interact with the collet upsets 1525. The collet slots 1665 are further preferably adapted to be aligned with the collet slots 1600 of the collet retaining adapter 640. In this manner, the collet retaining adapter 640 and the liner hanger setting sleeve 650 preferably cooperatively interact with and mate with the collet upsets 1525. The threaded portion 1670 is preferably adapted to be removably coupled to the second threaded portion 1645 of the second end 1625 of the outer collet support member 645. The threaded portion 1670 may include any number of conventional threaded portions. In a preferred embodiment, the threaded portion 1670 is a stub acme thread available from Halliburton Energy Services in order to optimally provide high tensile strength.

The second end 1655 of the liner hanger setting sleeve 650 preferably includes the interior shoulder 1672 and the threaded portion 1673. In a preferred embodiment, the threaded portion 1673 is adapted to be coupled to conventional tubular members. In this manner tubular members are hung from the second end 1655 of the liner hanger setting sleeve 650. The threaded portion 1673 may be any number of conventional commercially available threaded portions. In a preferred embodiment, the threaded portion 1673 is a stub acme thread available from Halliburton Energy Services in order to provide high tensile strength.

The crossover valve shear pins 655 are coupled to the second support member 515. The crossover valve shear pins 655 are releasably coupled to corresponding ones of the crossover valve members 520. The crossover valve shear pins 655 may include any number of conventional commercially available shear pins. In a preferred embodiment, the crossover valve shear pins 655 are ASTM B16 Brass H02 condition shear pins available from Halliburton Energy Services in order to optimally provide consistency.

The set screws 660 coupled to the liner hanger 595 and the outer collet support member 645. The set screws 660 may include any number of conventional commercially available set screws.

The collet retaining sleeve shear pins 665 are coupled to the collet mandrel 610. The collet retaining shear pins 665 are releasably coupled to the collet retaining sleeve 635. The collet retaining sleeve shear pins 665 may include any number of conventional commercially available shear pins. In a preferred embodiment, the collet retaining sleeve shear pins 665 are ASTM B16 Brass H02 condition shear pins available from Halliburton Energy Services in order to optimally provide consistent shear force values.

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The first passage 670 is fluidically coupled to the second passages 675 and the secondary throat passage 695. The first passage 670 is preferably defined by the interior of the first support member 505. The first passage 670 is preferably adapted to convey fluidic materials such as, for example, drilling mud, cement, and/or lubricants. In a preferred embodiment, the first passage 670 is adapted to convey fluidic materials at operating pressures and flow rates ranging from about 0 to 10,000 psi and 0 to 650 gallons/minute.

The second passages 675 are fluidically coupled to the first passage 670, the third passage 680, and the crossover valve chambers 685. The second passages 675 are preferably defined by a plurality of radial openings provided in the second end 1010 of the first support member 505. The second passages 675 are preferably adapted to convey fluidic materials such as, for example, drilling mud, cement and/or lubricants. In a preferred embodiment, the second passages 675 are adapted to convey fluidic materials at operating pressures and flow rates ranging from about 0 to 10,000 psi and 0 to 650 gallons/minute.

The third passage 680 is fluidically coupled to the second passages 675 and the force multiplier supply passages 790. The third passage 680 is preferably defined by the radial gap between the second end 1010 of the first support member 505 and the first end 1060 of the second support member 515. The third passage 680 is preferably adapted to convey fluidic materials such as, for example, drilling mud, cement, and/or lubricants. In a preferred embodiment, the third passage 680 is adapted to convey fluidic materials at operating pressures and flow rates ranging from about 0 to 10,000 psi and 0 to 200 gallons/minute.

The crossover valve chambers 685 are fluidically coupled to the third passage 680, the corresponding inner crossover ports 705, the corresponding outer crossover ports 710, and the corresponding seventh passages 770. The crossover valve chambers 685 are preferably defined by axial passages provided in the second support member 515. The crossover valve chambers 685 are movably coupled to corresponding crossover valve members 520. The crossover valve chambers 685 preferably have a substantially constant circular cross-section.

In a preferred embodiment, during operation of the apparatus 500 one end of one or more of the crossover valve chambers 685 is pressurized by fluidic materials injected into the third passage 680. In this manner, the crossover valve shear pins 655 are sheared and the crossover valve members 520 are displaced. The displacement of the crossover valve members 520 causes the corresponding inner and outer crossover ports, 705 and 710, to be fluidically coupled. In a particularly preferred embodiment, the crossover valve chambers 685 are pressurized by closing the primary and/or the secondary throat passages, 690 and 695, using conventional plugs or balls, and then injecting fluidic materials into the first, second and third passages 670, 675 and 680.

The primary throat passage 690 is fluidically coupled to the secondary throat passage 695 and the fourth passage 700. The primary throat passage 690 is preferably defined by a transitional section of the interior of the second support member 515 in which the inside diameter transitions from a first inside diameter to a second, and smaller, inside diameter. The primary throat passage 690 is preferably adapted to receive and mate with a conventional ball or plug. In this manner, the first passage 670 optimally fluidically isolated from the fourth passage 700.

The secondary throat passage 695 is fluidically coupled to the first passage 670 and the primary throat passage 695. The

secondary throat passage 695 is preferably defined by another transitional section of the interior of the second support member 515 in which the inside diameter transitions from a first inside diameter to a second, and smaller, inside diameter. The secondary throat passage 695 is preferably adapted to receive and mate with a conventional ball or plug. In this manner, the first passage 670 optimally fluidically isolated from the fourth passage 700.

In a preferred embodiment, the inside diameter of the primary throat passage 690 is less than or equal to the inside diameter of the secondary throat passage 695. In this manner, if required, a primary plug or ball can be placed in the primary throat passage 690, and then a larger secondary plug or ball can be placed in the secondary throat passage 695. In this manner, the first passage 670 is optimally fluidically isolated from the fourth passage 700.

The fourth passage 700 is fluidically coupled to the primary throat passage 690, the seventh passage 770, the force multiplier exhaust passages 725, the collet release ports 745, and the collet release throat passage 755. The fourth passage 700 is preferably defined by the interiors of the second support member 515, the force multiplier inner support member 530, the first coupling 545, the third support member 550, the second coupling 605, and the collet mandrel 610. The fourth passage 700 is preferably adapted to convey fluidic materials such as, for example, drilling mud, cement, and/or lubricants. In a preferred embodiment, the fourth passage 700 is adapted to convey fluidic materials at operating pressures and flow rates ranging from about 0 to 10,000 psi and 0 to 650 gallons/minute.

The inner crossover ports 705 are fluidically coupled to the fourth passage 700 and the corresponding crossover valve chambers 685. The inner crossover ports 705 are preferably defined by substantially radial openings provided in an interior wall of the second support member 515. The inner crossover ports 705 are preferably adapted to convey fluidic materials such as, for example, drilling mud, cement, and lubricants. In a preferred embodiment, the inner crossover ports 705 are adapted to convey fluidic materials at operating pressures and flow rates ranging from about 0 to 10,000 psi and 0 to 50 gallons/minute.

In a preferred embodiment, during operation of the apparatus 500, the inner crossover ports 705 are controllably fluidically coupled to the corresponding crossover valve chambers 685 and outer crossover ports 710 by displacement of the corresponding crossover valve members 520. In this manner, fluidic materials within the fourth passage 700 are exhausted to the exterior of the apparatus 500.

The outer crossover ports 710 are fluidically coupled to corresponding crossover valve chambers 685 and the exterior of the apparatus 500. The outer crossover ports 710 are preferably defined by substantially radial openings provided in an exterior wall of the second support member 515. The outer crossover ports 710 are preferably adapted to convey fluidic materials such as, for example, drilling mud, cement, and lubricants. In a preferred embodiment, the outer crossover ports 710 are adapted to convey fluidic materials at operating pressures and flow rates ranging from about 0 to 10,000 psi and 0 to 50 gallons/minute.

In a preferred embodiment, during operation of the apparatus 500, the outer crossover ports 710 are controllably fluidically coupled to the corresponding crossover valve chambers 685 and inner crossover ports 705 by displacement of the corresponding crossover valve members 520. In this manner, fluidic materials within the fourth passage 700 are exhausted to the exterior of the apparatus 500.

The force multiplier piston chamber 715 is fluidically coupled to the third passage 680. The force multiplier piston chamber 715 is preferably defined by the annular region defined by the radial gap between the force multiplier inner support member 530 and the force multiplier outer support member 525 and the axial gap between the end of the second support member 515 and the end of the lubrication fitting 565.

In a preferred embodiment, during operation of the apparatus, the force multiplier piston chamber 715 is pressurized to operating pressures ranging from about 0 to 10,000 psi. The pressurization of the force multiplier piston chamber 715 preferably displaces the force multiplier piston 535 and the force multiplier sleeve 540. The displacement of the force multiplier piston 535 and the force multiplier sleeve 540 in turn preferably displaces the mandrel 580 and expansion cone 585. In this manner, the liner hanger 595 is radially expanded. In a preferred embodiment, the pressurization of the force multiplier piston chamber 715 directly displaces the mandrel 580 and the expansion cone 585. In this manner, the force multiplier piston 535 and the force multiplier sleeve 540 may be omitted. In a preferred embodiment, the lubrication fitting 565 further includes one or more slots 566 for facilitating the passage of pressurized fluids to act directly upon the mandrel 580 and expansion cone 585.

The force multiplier exhaust chamber 720 is fluidically coupled to the force multiplier exhaust passages 725. The force multiplier exhaust chamber 720 is preferably defined by the annular region defined by the radial gap between the force multiplier inner support member 530 and the force multiplier sleeve 540 and the axial gap between the force multiplier piston 535 and the first coupling 545. In a preferred embodiment, during operation of the apparatus 500, fluidic materials within the force multiplier exhaust chamber 720 are exhausted into the fourth passage 700 using the force multiplier exhaust passages 725. In this manner, during operation of the apparatus 500, the pressure differential across the force multiplier piston 535 is substantially equal to the difference in operating pressures between the force multiplier piston chamber 715 and the fourth passage 700.

The force multiplier exhaust passages 725 are fluidically coupled to the force multiplier exhaust chamber 720 and the fourth passage 700. The force multiplier exhaust passages 725 are preferably defined by substantially radial openings provided in the second end 1160 of the force multiplier inner support member 530.

The second annular chamber 735 is fluidically coupled to the third annular chamber 750. The second annular chamber 735 is preferably defined by the annular region defined by the radial gap between the third support member 550 and the liner hanger 595 and the axial gap between the centralizer 590 and the collet assembly 625. In a preferred embodiment, during operation of the apparatus 500, fluidic materials displaced by movement of the mandrel 580 and expansion cone 585 are conveyed from the second annular chamber 735 to the third annular chamber 750, the sixth passages 765, and the sixth passage 760. In this manner, the operation of the apparatus 500 is optimized.

The expansion cone travel indicator ports 740 are fluidically coupled to the fourth passage 700. The expansion cone travel indicator ports 740 are controllably fluidically coupled to the second annular chamber 735. The expansion cone travel indicator ports 740 are preferably defined by radial openings in the third support member 550. In a preferred

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embodiment, during operation of the apparatus 500, the expansion cone travel indicator ports 740 are further controllably fluidically coupled to the force multiplier piston chamber 715 by displacement of the travel port sealing sleeve 600 caused by axial displacement of the mandrel 580 and expansion cone 585. In this manner, the completion of the radial expansion process is indicated by a pressure drop caused by fluidically coupling the force multiplier piston chamber 715 with the fourth passage 700.

The collet release ports 745 are fluidically coupled to the fourth passage 700 and the collet sleeve release chamber 805. The collet release ports 745 are controllably fluidically coupled to the second and third annular chambers, 735 and 750. The collet release ports 745 are defined by radial openings in the collet mandrel 610. In a preferred embodiment, during operation of the apparatus 500, the collet release ports 745 are controllably pressurized by blocking the collet release throat passage 755 using a conventional ball or plug. The pressurization of the collet release throat passage 755 in turn pressurizes the collet sleeve release chamber 805. The pressure differential between the pressurized collet sleeve release chamber 805 and the third annular chamber 750 then preferably shears the collet shear pins 665 and displaces the collet retaining sleeve 635 in the axial direction.

The third annular chamber 750 is fluidically coupled to the second annular chamber 735 and the sixth passages 765. The third annular chamber 750 is controllably fluidically coupled to the collet release ports 745. The third annular chamber 750 is preferably defined by the annular region defined by the radial gap between the collet mandrel 610 and the collet assembly 625 and the first end 1585 of the collet retaining adapter and the axial gap between the collet assembly 625 and the intermediate portion 1590 of the collet retaining adapter 640.

The collet release throat passage 755 is fluidically coupled to the fourth passage 700 and the fifth passage 760. The collet release throat passage 755 is preferably defined by a transitional section of the interior of the collet mandrel 610 including a first inside diameter that transitions into a second smaller inside diameter. The collet release throat passage 755 is preferably adapted to receive and mate with a conventional sealing plug or ball. In this manner, the fourth passage 700 is optimally fluidically isolated from the fifth passage 760. In a preferred embodiment, the maximum inside diameter of the collet release throat passage 755 is less than or equal to the minimum inside diameters of the primary and secondary throat passages, 690 and 695.

In a preferred embodiment, during operation of the apparatus 500, a conventional sealing plug or ball is placed in the collet release throat passage 755. The fourth passage 700 and the collet release ports 745 are then pressurized. The pressurization of the collet release throat passage 755 in turn pressurizes the collet sleeve release chamber 805. The pressure differential between the pressurized collet sleeve release chamber 805 and the third annular chamber 750 then preferably shears the collet shear pins 665 and displaces the collet retaining sleeve 635 in the axial direction.

The fifth passage 760 is fluidically coupled to the collet release throat passage 755 and the sixth passages 765. The fifth passage 760 is preferably defined by the interior of the second end 1595 of the collet retaining adapter 640.

The sixth passages 765 are fluidically coupled to the fifth passage 760 and the third annular chamber 750. The sixth passages 765 are preferably defined by approximately radial openings provided in the intermediate portion 1590 of the

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collet retaining adapter 640. In a preferred embodiment, during operation of the apparatus 500, the sixth passages 765 fluidically couple the third annular passage 750 to the fifth passage 760. In this manner, fluidic materials displaced by axial movement of the mandrel 580 and expansion cone 585 are exhausted to the fifth passage 760.

The seventh passages 770 are fluidically coupled to corresponding crossover valve chambers 685 and the fourth passage 700. The seventh passages 770 are preferably defined by radial openings in the intermediate portion 1065 of the second support member 515. During operation of the apparatus 700, the seventh passage 770 preferably maintain the rear portions of the corresponding crossover valve chamber 685 at the same operating pressure as the fourth passage 700. In this manner, the pressure differential across the crossover valve members 520 caused by blocking the primary and/or the secondary throat passages, 690 and 695, is optimally maintained.

The collet sleeve passages 775 are fluidically coupled to the second annular chamber 735 and the third annular chamber 750. The collet sleeve passages 775 are preferably adapted to convey fluidic materials between the second annular chamber 735 and the third annular chamber 750. The collet sleeve passages 735 are preferably defined by axial openings provided in the collet sleeve 635.

The force multiplier supply passages 790 are fluidically coupled to the third passage 680 and the force multiplier piston chamber 715. The force multiplier supply passages 790 are preferably defined by a plurality of substantially axial openings in the second support member 515. During operation of the apparatus 500, the force multiplier supply passages 790 preferably convey pressurized fluidic materials from the third passage 680 to the force multiplier piston chamber 715.

The first lubrication supply passage 795 is fluidically coupled to the lubrication fitting 1285 and the body of lubricant 575. The first lubrication supply passage 795 is preferably defined by openings provided in the lubrication fitting 565 and the annular region defined by the radial gap between the lubrication fitting 565 and the mandrel 580. During operation of the apparatus 500, the first lubrication passage 795 is preferably adapted to convey lubricants from the lubrication fitting 1285 to the body of lubricant 575.

The second lubrication supply passage 800 is fluidically coupled to the body of lubricant 575 and the expansion cone 585. The second lubrication supply passage 800 is preferably defined by the annular region defined by the radial gap between the expansion mandrel 580 and the liner hanger 595. During operation of the apparatus 500, the second lubrication passage 800 is preferably adapted to convey lubricants from the body of lubricant 575 to the expansion cone 585. In this manner, the dynamic interface between the expansion cone 585 and the liner hanger 595 is optimally lubricated.

The collet sleeve release chamber 805 is fluidically coupled to the collet release ports 745. The collet sleeve release chamber 805 is preferably defined by the annular region bounded by the recess 1455 and the second shoulder 1575. During operation of the apparatus 500, the collet sleeve release chamber 805 is preferably controllably pressurized. This manner, the collet release sleeve 635 is axially displaced.

Referring to FIGS. 4A to 4G, in a preferred embodiment, during operation of the apparatus 500, the apparatus 500 is coupled to an annular support member 2000 having an internal passage 2001, a first coupling 2005 having an

internal passage 2010, a second coupling 2015, a third coupling 2020 having an internal passage 2025, a fourth coupling 2030 having an internal passage 2035, a tail wiper 2050 having an internal passage 2055, a lead wiper 2060 having an internal passage 2065, and one or more tubular members 2070. The annular support member 2000 may include any number of conventional commercially available annular support members. In a preferred embodiment, the annular support member 2000 further includes a conventional controllable vent passage for venting fluidic materials from the internal passage 2001. In this manner, during placement of the apparatus 500 in the wellbore 2000, fluidic materials in the internal passage 2001 are vented thereby minimizing surge pressures.

The first coupling 2005 is preferably removably coupled to the second threaded portion 1615 of the collet retaining adapter 640 and the second coupling 2015. The first coupling 2005 may comprise any number of conventional commercially available couplings. In a preferred embodiment, the first coupling 2005 is an equalizer case available from Halliburton Energy Services in order to optimally provide containment of the equalizer valve.

The second coupling 2015 is preferably removably coupled to the first coupling 2005 and the third coupling 2020. The second coupling 2015 may comprise any number of conventional commercially available couplings. In a preferred embodiment, the second coupling 2015 is a bearing housing available from Halliburton Energy Services in order to optimally provide containment of the bearings.

The third coupling 2020 is preferably removably coupled to the second coupling 2015 and the fourth coupling 2030. The third coupling 2020 may comprise any number of conventional commercially available couplings. In a preferred embodiment, the third coupling 2020 is an SSR swivel mandrel available from Halliburton Energy Services in order to optimally provide for rotation of tubular members positioned above the SSR plug set.

The fourth coupling 2030 is preferably removably coupled to the third coupling 2020 and the tail wiper 2050. The fourth coupling 2030 may comprise any number of conventional commercially available couplings. In a preferred embodiment, the fourth coupling 2030 is a lower connector available from Halliburton Energy Services in order to optimally provide a connection to a SSR plug set.

The tail wiper 2050 is preferably removably coupled to the fourth coupling 2030 and the lead wiper 2060. The tail wiper 2050 may comprise any number of conventional commercially available tail wipers. In a preferred embodiment, the tail wiper 2050 is an SSR top plug available from Halliburton Energy Services in order to optimally provide separation of cement and drilling mud.

The lead wiper 2060 is preferably removably coupled to the tail wiper 2050. The lead wiper 2060 may comprise any number of conventional commercially available tail wipers. In a preferred embodiment, the lead wiper 2060 is an SSR bottom plug available from Halliburton Energy Services in order to optimally provide separation of mud and cement.

In a preferred embodiment, the first coupling 2005, the second coupling 2015, the third coupling 2020, the fourth coupling 2030, the tail wiper 2050, and the lead wiper 2060 are a conventional SSR wiper assembly available from Halliburton Energy Services in order to optimally provide separation of mud and cement.

The tubular member 2070 are coupled to the threaded portion 1673 of the liner hanger setting sleeve 650. The tubular member 2070 may include one or more tubular

members. In a preferred embodiment, the tubular member 2070 includes a plurality of conventional tubular members coupled end to end.

The apparatus 500 is then preferably positioned in a wellbore 2100 having a preexisting section of wellbore casing 2105 using the annular support member 2000. The wellbore 2100 and casing 2105 may be oriented in any direction from the vertical to the horizontal. In a preferred embodiment, the apparatus 500 is positioned within the wellbore 2100 with the liner hanger 595 overlapping with at least a portion of the preexisting wellbore casing 2105. In a preferred embodiment, during placement of the apparatus 500 within the wellbore 2100, fluidic materials 2200 within the wellbore 2100 are conveyed through the internal passage 2065, the internal passage 2055, the internal passage 2035, the internal passage 2025, the internal passage 2010, the fifth passage 760, the collet release throat passage 755, the fourth passage 700, the primary throat passage 690, the secondary throat passage 695, the first passage 670, and the internal passage 2001. In this manner, surge pressures during insertion and placement of the apparatus 500 within the wellbore 2000 are minimized. In a preferred embodiment, the internal passage 2001 further includes a controllable venting passage for conveying fluidic materials out of the internal passage 2001.

Referring to FIGS. 5A to 5C, in a preferred embodiment, in the event of an emergency after placement of the apparatus 500 within the wellbore 2000, the liner hanger 595, the outer collet support member 645, and the liner hanger setting sleeve 650 are decoupled from the apparatus 500 by first placing a ball 2300 within the collet release throat passage 755. A quantity of a fluidic material 2305 is then injected into the fourth passage 700, the collet release ports 745, and the collet sleeve release chamber 805. In a preferred embodiment, the fluidic material 2305 is a non-hardenable fluidic material such as, for example, drilling mud. Continued injection of the fluidic material 2305 preferably pressurizes the collet sleeve release chamber 805. In a preferred embodiment, the collet sleeve release chamber 805 is pressurized to operating pressures ranging from about 1,000 to 3,000 psi in order to optimally provide a positive indication of the shifting of the collet retaining sleeve 635 as indicated by a sudden pressure drop. The pressurization of the collet sleeve release chamber 805 preferably applies an axial force to the collet retaining sleeve 635. The axial force applied to the collet retaining sleeve 635 preferably shears the collet retaining sleeve shear pins 665. The collet retaining sleeve 635 then preferably is displaced in the axial direction 2310 away from the collet upsets 1525. In a preferred embodiment, the collet retaining sleeve 635 is axially displaced when the operating pressure within the collet sleeve release chamber 805 is greater than about 1650 psi. In this manner, the collet upsets 1525 are no longer held in place within the collet slots 1600 and 1665 by the collet retaining sleeve 635.

In a preferred embodiment, the collet mandrel 610 is then displaced in the axial direction 2315 causing the collet upsets 1525 to be moved in a radial direction 2320 out of the collet slots 1665. The liner hanger 595, the outer collet support member 645, and the liner hanger setting sleeve 650 are thereby decoupled from the remaining portions of the apparatus 500. The remaining portions of the apparatus 500 are then removed from the wellbore 2100. In this manner, in the event of an emergency during operation of the apparatus, the liner hanger 595, the outer collet support member 645, and the liner hanger setting sleeve 650 are decoupled from the apparatus 500. This provides an reliable and efficient

method of recovering from an emergency situation such as, for example, where the liner hanger **595**, and/or outer collet support member **645**, and/or the liner hanger setting sleeve **650** become lodged within the wellbore **2100** and/or the wellbore casing **2105**.

Referring to FIGS. 6A to 6C, in a preferred embodiment, after positioning the apparatus **500** within the wellbore **2100**, the lead wiper **2060** is released from the apparatus **500** by injecting a conventional ball **2400** into an end portion of the lead wiper **2060** using a fluidic material **2405**. In a preferred embodiment, the fluidic material **2405** is a non-hardenable fluidic material such as, for example, drilling mud.

Referring to FIGS. 7A to 7G, in a preferred embodiment, after releasing the lead wiper **2060** from the apparatus **500**, a quantity of a hardenable fluidic sealing material **2500** is injected from the apparatus **500** into the wellbore **2100** using the internal passage **2001**, the first passage **670**, the secondary throat passage **695**, the primary throat passage **690**, the fourth passage **700**, the collet release throat passage **755**, the fifth passage **760**, the internal passage **2010**, the internal passage **2025**, the internal passage **2035**, and the internal passage **2055**. In a preferred embodiment, the hardenable fluidic sealing material **2500** substantially fills the annular space surrounding the liner hanger **595**. The hardenable fluidic sealing material **2500** may include any number of conventional hardenable fluidic sealing materials such as, for example, cement or epoxy resin. In a preferred embodiment, the hardenable fluidic sealing material includes oil well cement available from Halliburton Energy Services in order to provide an optimal seal for the surrounding formations and structural support for the liner hanger **595** and tubular members **2070**. In an alternative embodiment, the injection of the hardenable fluidic sealing material **2500** is omitted.

As illustrated in FIG. 7C, in a preferred embodiment, prior to the initiation of the radial expansion process, the preload spring **560** exerts a substantially constant axial force on the mandrel **580** and expansion cone **585**. In this manner, the expansion cone **585** is maintained in a substantially stationary position prior to the initiation of the radial expansion process. In a preferred embodiment, the amount of axial force exerted by the preload spring **560** is varied by varying the length of the spring spacer **555**. In a preferred embodiment, the axial force exerted by the preload spring **560** on the mandrel **580** and expansion cone **585** ranges from about 500 to 2,000 lbf in order to optimally provide an axial preload force on the expansion cone **585** to ensure metal to metal contact between the outside diameter of the expansion cone **585** and the interior surface of the liner hanger **595**.

Referring to FIGS. 8A to 8C, in a preferred embodiment, after injecting the hardenable fluidic sealing material **2500** out of the apparatus **500** and into the wellbore **2100**, the tail wiper **2050** is preferably released from the apparatus **500** by injecting a conventional wiper dart **2600** into the tail wiper **2050** using a fluidic material **2605**. In a preferred embodiment, the fluidic material **2605** is a non-hardenable fluidic material such as, for example, drilling mud.

Referring to FIGS. 9A to 9H, in a preferred embodiment, after releasing the tail wiper **2050** from the apparatus **500**, a conventional ball plug **2700** is placed in the primary throat passage **690** by injecting a fluidic material **2705** into the first passage **670**. In a preferred embodiment, a conventional ball plug **2710** is also placed in the secondary throat passage **695**. In this manner, the first passage **670** is optimally fluidically isolated from the fourth passage **700**. In a preferred

embodiment, the differential pressure across the ball plugs **2700** and/or **2710** ranges from about 0 to 10,000 psi in order to optimally fluidically isolate the first passage **670** from the fourth passage **700**. In a preferred embodiment, the fluidic material **2705** is a non-hardenable fluidic material. In a preferred embodiment, the fluidic material **2705** includes one or more of the following: drilling mud, water, oil and lubricants.

The injected fluidic material **2705** preferably is conveyed to the crossover valve chamber **685** through the first passage **670**, the second passages **675**, and the third passage **680**. The injected fluidic material **2705** is also preferably conveyed to the force multiplier piston chamber **715** through the first passage **670**, the second passages **675**, the third passage **680**, and the force multiplier supply passages **790**. The fluidic material **2705** injected into the crossover valve chambers **685** preferably applies an axial force on one end of the crossover valve members **520**. In a preferred embodiment, the axial force applied to the crossover valve members **520** by the injected fluidic material **2705** shears the crossover valve shear pins **655**. In this manner, one or more of the crossover valve members **520** are displaced in the axial direction thereby fluidically coupling the fourth passage **700**, the inner crossover ports **705**, the crossover valve chambers **685**, the outer crossover ports **710**, and the region outside of the apparatus **500**. In this manner, fluidic materials **2715** within the apparatus **500** are conveyed outside of the apparatus. In a preferred embodiment, the operating pressure of the fluidic material **2705** is gradually increased after the placement of the sealing ball **2700** and/or the sealing ball **2710** in the primary throat passage **690** and/or the secondary throat passage **695** in order to minimize stress on the apparatus **500**. In a preferred embodiment, the operating pressure required to displace the crossover valve members **520** ranges from about 500 to 3,000 psi in order to optimally prevent inadvertent or premature shifting the crossover valve members **520**. In a preferred embodiment, the one or more of the crossover valve members **520** are displaced when the operating pressure of the fluidic material **2705** is greater than or equal to about 1860 psi. In a preferred embodiment, the radial expansion of the liners hanger **595** does not begin until one or more of the crossover valve members **520** are displaced in the axial direction. In this manner, the operation of the apparatus **500** is precisely controlled. Furthermore, in a preferred embodiment, the outer crossover ports **710** include controllable variable orifices in order to control the flow rate of the fluidic materials conveyed outside of the apparatus **500**. In this manner, the rate of the radial expansion process is optimally controlled.

In a preferred embodiment, after displacing one or more of the crossover valve members **520**, the operating pressure of the fluidic material **2705** is gradually increased until the radial expansion process begins. In an exemplary embodiment, the radial expansion process begins when the operating pressure of the fluidic material **2705** within the force multiplier piston chamber **715** is greater than about 3200 psi. The operating pressure within the force multiplier piston chamber **715** preferably causes the force multiplier piston **535** to be displaced in the axial direction. The axial displacement of the force multiplier piston **535** preferably causes the force multiplier sleeve **540** to be displaced in the axial direction. Fluidic materials **2720** within the force multiplier exhaust chamber **720** are then preferably exhausted into the fourth passage **700** through the force multiplier exhaust passages **725**. In this manner, the differential pressure across the force multiplier piston **535** is maximized. In an exemplary embodiment, the force multi-

plier piston **535** includes about 11.65 square inches of surface area in order to optimally increase the rate of radial expansion of the liner hanger **595** by the expansion cone **585**. In a preferred embodiment, the operating pressure within the force multiplier piston chamber **715** ranges from about 1,000 to 10,000 psi during the radial expansion process in order to optimally provide radial expansion of the liner hanger **595**.

In a preferred embodiment, the axial displacement of the force multiplier sleeve **540** causes the force multiplier sleeve **540** to drive the mandrel **580** and expansion cone **585** in the axial direction. In a preferred embodiment, the axial displacement of the expansion cone **585** radially expands the liner hanger **595** into contact with the preexisting wellbore casing **2105**. In a preferred embodiment, the operating pressure within the force multiplier piston chamber **715** also drives the mandrel **580** and expansion cone **585** in the axial direction. In this manner, the axial force for axially displacing the mandrel **580** and expansion cone **585** preferably includes the axial force applied by the force multiplier sleeve **540** and the axial force applied by the operating pressure within the force multiplier piston chamber **715**. In an alternative preferred embodiment, the force multiplier piston **535** and the force multiplier sleeve **540** are omitted and the mandrel **580** and expansion cone **585** are driven solely by fluid pressure.

The radial expansion of the liner hanger **595** preferably causes the top rings **1385** and the lower rings **1390** of the liner hanger **595** to penetrate the interior walls of the preexisting wellbore casing **2105**. In this manner, the liner hanger **595** is optimally coupled to the wellbore casing **2105**. In a preferred embodiment, during the radial expansion of the liner hanger **595**, the intermediate sealing members **1395** of the liner hanger **595** fluidically seal the interface between the radially expanded liner hanger **595** and the interior surface of the wellbore casing **2105**.

During the radial expansion process, the dynamic interface between the exterior surface of the expansion cone **585** and the interior surface of the liner hanger **595** is preferably lubricated by lubricants supplied from the body of lubricant **575** through the second lubrication supply passage **800**. In this manner, the operational efficiency of the apparatus **500** during the radial expansion process is optimized. In a preferred embodiment, the lubricants supplied by the body of lubricant **575** through the second lubrication passage **800** are injected into the dynamic interface between the exterior surface of the expansion cone **585** and the interior surface of the liner hanger **595** substantially as disclosed in one or more of the following: (1) U.S. patent application Ser. No. 09/440,338, filed on Nov. 15, 1999, which issued as U.S. Pat. No. 6,328,113, which claimed benefit of the filing date of U.S. Provisional Patent Application Ser. No. 60/108,558, filed on Nov. 16, 1998, (2) U.S. patent application Ser. No. 09/454,139, filed on Dec. 3, 1999, which claimed benefit of the filing date of U.S. Provisional Patent Application Ser. No. 60/111,293, filed on Dec. 7, 1998, (3) U.S. patent application Ser. No. 09/502,350, filed on Feb. 10, 2000, which claimed the benefit of the filing date of U.S. Provisional Patent Application Ser. No. 60/119,611, filed Feb. 11, 1999, (4) U.S. patent application Ser. No. 09/510,913, filed on Feb. 23, 2000, which claimed the benefit of the filing date of U.S. Provisional Patent Application Ser. No. 60/121,702, filed on Feb. 25, 1999, (5) U.S. patent application Ser. No. 09/511,941, filed on Feb. 24, 2000, which claimed the benefit of the filing date of U.S. Provisional Patent Application No. 60/121,907, filed Feb. 16, 1999, (6) U.S. Provisional Patent Application Ser. No. 60/124,042, filed on Mar. 11, 1999, (7)

U.S. Provisional Patent Application Ser. No. 60/131,106, filed on Apr. 26, 1999, (8) U.S. Provisional Patent Application Ser. No. 60/137,998, filed on Jun. 7, 1999, (9) U.S. Provisional Patent Application Ser. No. 60/143,039, filed on Jul. 9, 1999, and (10) U.S. Provisional Patent Application Ser. No. 60/146,203, filed on Jul. 29, 1999, the disclosures of which are incorporated by reference.

In a preferred embodiment, the expansion cone **585** is reversible. In this manner, if one end of the expansion cone **585** becomes excessively worn, the apparatus **500** can be disassembled and the expansion cone **585** reversed in order to use the un-worn end of the expansion cone **585** to radially expand the liner hanger **595**. In a preferred embodiment, the expansion cone **585** further includes one or more surface inserts fabricated from materials such as, for example, tungsten carbide, in order to provide an extremely durable material for contacting the interior surface of the liner hanger **595** during the radial expansion process.

During the radial expansion process, the centralizer **590** preferably centrally positions the mandrel **580** and the expansion cone **585** within the interior of the liner hanger **595**. In this manner, the radial expansion process is optimally provided.

During the radial expansion process, fluidic materials **2725** within the second annular chamber **735** are preferably conveyed to the fifth passage **760** through the collet sleeve passages **775**, the flow passages **1530**, the third annular chamber **750**, and the sixth passages **765**. In this manner, the axial displacement of the mandrel **580** and the expansion cone **585** are optimized.

Referring to FIGS. **10A** to **10E**, in a preferred embodiment, the radial expansion of the liner hanger **595** is stopped by fluidically coupling the force multiplier piston chamber **715** with the fourth passage **700**. In particular, during the radial expansion process, the continued axial displacement of the mandrel **580** and the expansion cone **585**, caused by the injection of the fluidic material **2705**, displaces the travel port sealing sleeve **600** and causes the force multiplier piston chamber **715** to be fluidically coupled to the fourth passage **700** through the expansion cone travel indicator ports **740**. In a preferred embodiment, the travel port sealing sleeve **600** is removably coupled to the third support member **550** by one or more shear pins. In this manner, accidental movement of the travel port sealing sleeve **600** is prevented.

In a preferred embodiment, the fluidic coupling of the force multiplier piston chamber **715** with the fourth passage **700** reduces the operating pressure within the force multiplier piston chamber **715**. In a preferred embodiment, the reduction in the operating pressure within the force multiplier piston chamber **715** stops the axial displacement of the mandrel **580** and the expansion cone **585**. In this manner, the radial expansion of the liner hanger **595** is optimally stopped. In an alternative preferred embodiment, the drop in the operating pressure within the force multiplier piston chamber **715** is remotely detected and the injection of the fluidic material **2705** is reduced and/or stopped in order to gradually reduce and/or stop the radial expansion process. In this manner, the radial expansion process is optimally controlled by sensing the operating pressure within the force multiplier piston chamber **715**.

In a preferred embodiment, after the completion of the radial expansion process, the hardenable fluidic sealing material **2500** is cured. In this manner, a hard annular outer layer of sealing material is formed in the annular region around the liner hanger **595**. In an alternative embodiment, the hardenable fluidic sealing material **2500** is omitted.

Referring to FIGS. 11A to 11E, in a preferred embodiment, the liner hanger 595, the outer collet support member 645, and the liner hanger setting sleeve 650 are then decoupled from the apparatus 500. In a preferred embodiment, the liner hanger 595, the collet retaining adapter 640, the outer collet support member 645, and the liner hanger setting sleeve 650 are decoupled from the apparatus 500 by first displacing the annular support member 2000, the first support member 505, the second support member 515, the force multiplier outer support member 525, the force multiplier inner support member 530, the first coupling 545, the third support member 550, the second coupling 605, the collet mandrel 610, and the collet retaining adapter 640 in the axial direction 2800 relative to the liner hanger 595, the outer collet support member 645, and the liner hanger setting sleeve 650.

In particular, as illustrated in FIG. 11D, the axial displacement of the collet mandrel 610 in the axial direction 2800 preferably displaces the collet retaining sleeve 635 in the axial direction 2800 relative to the collet upsets 1525. In this manner, the collet upsets 1525 are no longer held in the collet slots 1665 by the collet retaining sleeve 635. Furthermore, in a preferred embodiment, the axial displacement of the collet mandrel 610 in the axial direction 2800 preferably displaces the first shoulder 1445 in the axial direction 2800 relative to the locking dogs 620. In this manner, the locking dogs 620 lock onto the first shoulder 1445 when the collet mandrel 610 is then displaced in the axial direction 2805. In a preferred embodiment, axial displacement of the collet mandrel of about 1.50 inches displaces the collet retaining sleeve 635 out from under the collet upsets 1525 and also locks the locking dogs 620 onto the first shoulder 1445 of the collet mandrel 610. Furthermore, the axial displacement of the collet retaining adapter 640 in the axial direction 2800 also preferably displaces the slots 1600 away from the collet upsets 1525.

In a preferred embodiment, the liner hanger 595, the collet retaining adapter 640, the outer collet support member 645, and the liner hanger setting sleeve 650 are then decoupled from the apparatus 500 by displacing the annular support member 2000, the first support member 505, the second support member 515, the force multiplier outer support member 525, the force multiplier inner support member 530, the first coupling 545, the third support member 550, the second coupling 605, the collet mandrel 610, and the collet retaining adapter 640 in the axial direction 2805 relative to the liner hanger 595, the outer collet support member 645, and the liner hanger setting sleeve 650. In particular, the subsequent axial displacement of the collet mandrel 610 in the axial direction 2805 preferably pulls and decouples the collet upsets 1525 from the collet slots 1665. In a preferred embodiment, the angled outer surfaces 1545 of the collet upsets 1525 facilitate the decoupling process.

In an alternative embodiment, if the locking dogs 620 do not lock onto the first shoulder 1445 of the collet mandrel 610, then the annular support member 2000, the first support member 505, the second support member 515, the force multiplier outer support member 525, the force multiplier inner support member 530, the first coupling 545, the third support member 550, the second coupling 605, the collet mandrel 610, and the collet retaining adapter 640 are then displaced back in the axial direction 2800 and rotated. The rotation of the annular support member 2000, the first support member 505, the second support member 515, the force multiplier outer support member 525, the force multiplier inner support member 530, the first coupling 545, the third support member 550, the second coupling 605, the

collet mandrel 610, and the collet retaining adapter 640 preferably misaligns the collet slots 1600 and 1665. In this manner, a subsequent displacement of the in the axial direction 2805 pushes the collet upsets 1525 out of the collet slots 1665 in the liner hanger setting sleeve 650. In a preferred embodiment, the amount of rotation ranges from about 5 to 40 degrees. In this manner, the liner hanger 595, the outer collet support member 645, and the liner hanger setting sleeve 650 are then decoupled from the apparatus 500.

In a preferred embodiment, the removal of the apparatus 500 from the interior of the radially expanded liner hanger 595 is facilitated by the presence of the body of lubricant 575. In particular, the body of lubricant 575 preferably lubricates the interface between the interior surface of the radially expanded liner hanger 595 and the exterior surface of the expansion cone 585. In this manner, the axial force required to remove the apparatus 500 from the interior of the radially expanded liner hanger 595 is minimized.

Referring to FIGS. 12A to 12C, after the removal of the remaining portions of the apparatus 500, a new section of wellbore casing is provided that preferably includes the liner hanger 595, the outer collet support member 645, the liner hanger setting sleeve 650, the tubular members 2070 and an outer annular layer of cured material 2900.

In an alternative embodiment, the interior of the radially expanded liner hanger 595 is used as a polished bore receptacle ("PBR"). In an alternative embodiment, the interior of the radially expanded liner hanger 595 is machined and then used as a PBR. In an alternative embodiment, the first end 1350 of the liner hanger 595 is threaded and coupled to a PBR.

In a preferred embodiment, all surfaces of the apparatus 500 that provide a dynamic seal are nickel plated in order to provide optimal wear resistance.

Referring to FIGS. 13A to 13G, an alternative embodiment of an apparatus 3000 for forming or repairing a wellbore casing, pipeline or structural support will be described. The apparatus 3000 preferably includes the first support member 505, the debris shield 510, the second support member 515, the one or more crossover valve members 520, the force multiplier outer support member 525, the force multiplier inner support member 530, the force multiplier piston 535, the force multiplier sleeve 540, the first coupling 545, the third support member 550, the spring spacer 555, the preload spring 560, the lubrication fitting 565, the lubrication packer sleeve 570, the body of lubricant 575, the mandrel 580, the expansion cone 585, the centralizer 590, the liner hanger 595, the travel port sealing sleeve 600, the second coupling 605, the collet mandrel 610, the load transfer sleeve 615, the one or more locking dogs 620, the locking dog retainer 622, the collet assembly 625, the collet retaining sleeve 635, the collet retaining adapter 640, the outer collet support member 645, the liner hanger setting sleeve 650, the one or more crossover valve shear pins 655, the one or more collet retaining sleeve shear pins 665, the first passage 670, the one or more second passages 675, the third passage 680, the one or more crossover valve chambers 685, the primary throat passage 690, the secondary throat passage 695, the fourth passage 700, the one or more inner crossover ports 705, the one or more outer crossover ports 710, the force multiplier piston chamber 715, the force multiplier exhaust chamber 720, the one or more force multiplier exhaust passages 725, the second annular chamber 735, the one or more expansion cone travel indicator ports 740, the one or more collet release ports 745,

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the third annular chamber 750, the collet release throat passage 755, the fifth passage 760, the one or more sixth passages 765, the one or more seventh passages 770, the one or more collet sleeve passages 775, the one or more force multiplier supply passages 790, the first lubrication supply passage 795, the second lubrication supply passage 800, the collet sleeve release chamber 805, and a standoff adaptor 3005.

Except as described below, the design and operation of the first support member 505, the debris shield 510, the second support member 515, the one or more crossover valve members 520, the force multiplier outer support member 525, the force multiplier inner support member 530, the force multiplier piston 535, the force multiplier sleeve 540, the first coupling 545, the third support member 550, the spring spacer 555, the preload spring 560, the lubrication fitting 565, the lubrication packer sleeve 570, the body of lubricant 575, the mandrel 580, the expansion cone 585, the centralizer 590, the liner hanger 595, the travel port sealing sleeve 600, the second coupling 605, the collet mandrel 610, the load transfer sleeve 615, the one or more locking dogs 620, the locking dog retainer 622, the collet assembly 625, the collet retaining sleeve 635, the collet retaining adapter 640, the outer collet support member 645, the liner hanger setting sleeve 650, the one or more crossover valve shear pins 655, the one or more collet retaining sleeve shear pins 665, the first passage 670, the one or more second passages 675, the third passage 680, the one or more crossover valve chambers 685, the primary throat passage 690, the secondary throat passage 695, the fourth passage 700, the one or more inner crossover ports 705, the one or more outer crossover ports 710, the force multiplier piston chamber 715, the force multiplier exhaust chamber 720, the one or more force multiplier exhaust passages 725, the second annular chamber 735, the one or more expansion cone travel indicator ports 740, the one or more collet release ports 745, the third annular chamber 750, the collet release throat passage 755, the fifth passage 760, the one or more sixth passages 765, the one or more seventh passages 770, the one or more collet sleeve passages 775, the one or more force multiplier supply passages 790, the first lubrication supply passage 795, the second lubrication supply passage 800, and the collet sleeve release chamber 805 of the apparatus 3000 are preferably provided as described above with reference to the apparatus 500 in FIGS. 2A to 12C.

Referring to FIGS. 13A to 13C, the standoff adaptor 3005 is coupled to the first end 1005 of the first support member 505. The standoff adaptor 3005 preferably has a substantially annular cross-section. The standoff adaptor 3005 may be fabricated from any number of conventional commercially available materials. In a preferred embodiment, the standoff adaptor 3005 is fabricated from alloy steel having a minimum yield strength of about 75,000 to 140,000 psi in order to optimally provide high tensile strength and resistance to abrasion and fluid erosion. In a preferred embodiment, the standoff adaptor 3005 includes a first end 3010, a second end 3015, an intermediate portion 3020, a first threaded portion 3025, one or more slots 3030, and a second threaded portion 3035.

The first end 3010 of the standoff adaptor 3005 preferably includes the first threaded portion 3025. The first threaded portion 3025 is preferably adapted to be removably coupled to a conventional tubular support member. The first threaded portion 3025 may be any number of conventional threaded portions. In a preferred embodiment, the first threaded portion 3025 is a 4½" API IF JT BOX thread in order to optimally provide tensile strength.

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The intermediate portion 3020 of the standoff adaptor 3005 preferably includes the slots 3030. The outside diameter of the intermediate portion 3020 of the standoff adaptor 3005 is preferably greater than the outside diameter of the liner hanger 595 in order to optimally protect the sealing members 1395, and the top and bottom rings, 1380 and 1390, from abrasion when positioning and/or rotating the apparatus 3000 within a wellbore, or other tubular member. The intermediate portion 3020 of the standoff adaptor 3005 preferably includes a plurality of axial slots 3030 equally positioned about the circumference of the intermediate portion 3020 in order to optimally permit wellbore fluids and other materials to be conveyed along the outside surface of the apparatus 3000.

The second end of the standoff adaptor 3005 preferably includes the second threaded portion 3035. The second threaded portion 3035 is preferably adapted to be removably coupled to the first threaded portion 1015 of the first end 1005 of the first support member 505. The second threaded portion 3035 may be any number of conventional threaded portions. In a preferred embodiment, the second threaded portion 3035 is a 4½" API IF JT PIN thread in order to optimally provide tensile strength.

Referring to FIGS. 13D and 13E, in the apparatus 3000, the second end 1360 of the liner hanger 595 is preferably coupled to the first end 1620 of the outer collet support member 645 using a threaded connection 3040. The threaded connection 3040 is preferably adapted to provide a threaded connection having a primary metal-to-metal seal 3045a and a secondary metal-to-metal seal 3045b in order to optimally provide a fluidic seal. In a preferred embodiment, the threaded connection 3040 is a DS HST threaded connection available from Halliburton Energy Services in order to optimally provide high tensile strength and a fluidic seal for high operating temperatures.

Referring to FIGS. 13D and 13F, in the apparatus 3000, the second end 1625 of the outer collet support member 645 is preferably coupled to the first end 1650 of the liner hanger setting sleeve 650 using a substantially permanent connection 3050. In this manner, the tensile strength of the connection between the second end 1625 of the outer collet support member 645 and the first end 1650 of the liner hanger setting sleeve 650 is optimized. In a preferred embodiment, the permanent connection 3050 includes a threaded connection 3055 and a welded connection 3060. In this manner, the tensile strength of the connection between the second end 1625 of the outer collet support member 645 and the first end 1650 of the liner hanger setting sleeve 650 is optimized.

Referring to FIGS. 13D, 13E and 13F, in the apparatus 3000, the liner hanger setting sleeve 650 further preferably includes an intermediate portion 3065 having one or more axial slots 3070. In a preferred embodiment, the outside diameter of the intermediate portion 3065 of the liner hanger setting sleeve 650 is greater than the outside diameter of the liner hanger 595 in order to protect the sealing elements 1395 and the top and bottom rings, 1385 and 1390, from abrasion when positioning and/or rotating the apparatus 3000 within a wellbore casing or other tubular member. The intermediate portion 3065 of the liner hanger setting sleeve 650 preferably includes a plurality of axial slots 3070 equally positioned about the circumference of the intermediate portion 3065 in order to optimally permit wellbore fluids and other materials to be conveyed along the outside surface of the apparatus 3000.

In several alternative preferred embodiments, the apparatus 500 and 3000 are used to fabricate and/or repair a

wellbore casing, a pipeline, or a structural support. In several other alternative embodiments, the apparatus **500** and **3000** are used to fabricate a wellbore casing, pipeline, or structural support including a plurality of concentric tubular members coupled to a preexisting tubular member.

An apparatus for coupling a tubular member to a preexisting structure has been described that includes a first support member including a first fluid passage, a manifold coupled to the support member including: a second fluid passage coupled to the first fluid passage including a throat passage adapted to receive a plug, a third fluid passage coupled to the second fluid passage, and a fourth fluid passage coupled to the second fluid passage, a second support member coupled to the manifold including a fifth fluid passage coupled to the second fluid passage, an expansion cone coupled to the second support member, a tubular member coupled to the first support member including one or more sealing members positioned on an exterior surface, a first interior chamber defined by the portion of the tubular member above the manifold, the first interior chamber coupled to the fourth fluid passage, a second interior chamber defined by the portion of the tubular member between the manifold and the expansion cone, the second interior chamber coupled to the third fluid passage, a third interior chamber defined by the portion of the tubular member below the expansion cone, the third interior chamber coupled to the fifth fluid passage, and a shoe coupled to the tubular member including: a throat passage coupled to the third interior chamber adapted to receive a wiper dart, and a sixth fluid passage coupled to the throat passage. In a preferred embodiment, the expansion cone is slidably coupled to the second support member. In a preferred embodiment, the expansion cone includes a central aperture that is coupled to the second support member.

A method of coupling a tubular member to a preexisting structure has also been described that includes positioning a support member, an expansion cone, and a tubular member within a preexisting structure, injecting a first quantity of a fluidic material into the preexisting structure below the expansion cone, and injecting a second quantity of a fluidic material into the preexisting structure above the expansion cone. In a preferred embodiment, the injecting of the first quantity of the fluidic material includes: injecting a hardenable fluidic material. In a preferred embodiment, the injecting of the second quantity of the fluidic material includes: injecting a non-hardenable fluidic material. In a preferred embodiment, the method further includes fluidically isolating an interior portion of the tubular member from an exterior portion of the tubular member. In a preferred embodiment, the method further includes fluidically isolating a first interior portion of the tubular member from a second interior portion of the tubular member. In a preferred embodiment, the expansion cone divides the interior of the tubular member into a pair of interior chambers. In a preferred embodiment, one of the interior chambers is pressurized. In a preferred embodiment, the method further includes a manifold for distributing the first and second quantities of fluidic material. In a preferred embodiment, the expansion cone and manifold divide the interior of the tubular member into three interior chambers. In a preferred embodiment, one of the interior chambers is pressurized.

An apparatus has also been described that includes a preexisting structure and an expanded tubular member coupled to the preexisting structure. The expanded tubular member is coupled to the preexisting structure by the process of: positioning a support member, an expansion

cone, and the tubular member within the preexisting structure, injecting a first quantity of a fluidic material into the preexisting structure below the expansion cone, and injecting a second quantity of a fluidic material into the preexisting structure above the expansion cone. In a preferred embodiment, the injecting of the first quantity of the fluidic material includes: injecting a hardenable fluidic material. In a preferred embodiment, the injecting of the second quantity of the fluidic material includes: injecting a non-hardenable fluidic material. In a preferred embodiment, the apparatus further includes fluidically isolating an interior portion of the tubular member from an exterior portion of the tubular member. In a preferred embodiment, the apparatus further includes fluidically isolating a first interior portion of the tubular member from a second interior portion of the tubular member. In a preferred embodiment, the expansion cone divides the interior of the tubular member into a pair of interior chambers. In a preferred embodiment, one of the interior chambers is pressurized. In a preferred embodiment, the apparatus further includes a manifold for distributing the first and second quantities of fluidic material. In a preferred embodiment, the expansion cone and manifold divide the interior of the tubular member into three interior chambers. In a preferred embodiment, one of the interior chambers is pressurized.

An apparatus for coupling two elements has also been described that includes a support member including one or more support member slots, a tubular member including one or more tubular member slots, and a coupling for removably coupling the tubular member to the support member, including:

a coupling body movably coupled to the support member, one or more coupling arms extending from the coupling body and coupling elements extending from corresponding coupling arms adapted to mate with corresponding support member and tubular member slots. In a preferred embodiment, the coupling elements include one or more angled surfaces. In a preferred embodiment, the coupling body includes one or more locking elements for locking the coupling body to the support member. In a preferred embodiment, the apparatus further includes a sleeve movably coupled to the support member for locking the coupling elements within the support member and tubular member slots. In a preferred embodiment, the apparatus further includes one or more shear pins for removably coupling the sleeve to the support member. In a preferred embodiment, the apparatus further includes a pressure chamber positioned between the support member and the sleeve for axially displacing the sleeve relative to the support member.

A method of coupling a first member to a second member has also been described that includes forming a first set of coupling slots in the first member, forming a second set of coupling slots in the second member, aligning the first and second pairs of coupling slots and inserting coupling elements into each of the pairs of coupling slots. In a preferred embodiment, the method further includes movably coupling the coupling elements to the first member. In a preferred embodiment, the method further includes preventing the coupling elements from being removed from each of the pairs of coupling slots. In a preferred embodiment, the first and second members are decoupled by the process of: rotating the first member relative to the second member, and axially displacing the first member relative to the second member. In a preferred embodiment, the first and second members are decoupled by the process of: permitting the coupling elements to be removed from each of the pairs of coupling slots, and axially displacing the first member

relative to the second member in a first direction. In a preferred embodiment, permitting the coupling elements to be removed from each of the pairs of coupling slots includes: axially displacing the first member relative to the second member in a second direction. In a preferred embodiment, the first and second directions are opposite. In a preferred embodiment, permitting the coupling elements to be removed from each of the pairs of coupling slots includes: pressurizing an interior portion of the first member.

An apparatus for controlling the flow of fluidic materials within a housing has also been described that includes a first passage within the housing, a throat passage within the housing fluidically coupled to the first passage adapted to receive a plug, a second passage within the housing fluidically coupled to the throat passage, a third passage within the housing fluidically coupled to the first passage, one or more valve chambers within the housing fluidically coupled to the third passage including moveable valve elements, a fourth passage within the housing fluidically coupled to the valve chambers and a region outside of the housing, a fifth passage within the housing fluidically coupled to the second passage and controllably coupled to the valve chambers by corresponding valve elements, and a sixth passage within the housing fluidically coupled to the second passage and the valve chambers. In a preferred embodiment, the apparatus further includes: one or more shear pins for removably coupling the valve elements to corresponding valve chambers. In a preferred embodiment, the third passage has a substantially annular cross section. In a preferred embodiment, the throat passage includes: a primary throat passage, and a larger secondary throat passage fluidically coupled to the primary throat passage. In a preferred embodiment, the apparatus further includes: a debris shield positioned within the third passage for preventing debris from entering the valve chambers. In a preferred embodiment, the apparatus further includes: a piston chamber within the housing fluidically coupled to the third passage, and a piston movably coupled to and positioned within the piston chamber.

A method of controlling the flow of fluidic materials within a housing including an inlet passage and an outlet passage has also been described that includes injecting fluidic materials into the inlet passage, blocking the inlet passage, and opening the outlet passage. In a preferred embodiment, opening the outlet passage includes: conveying fluidic materials from the inlet passage to a valve element, and displacing the valve element. In a preferred embodiment, conveying fluidic materials from the inlet passage to the valve element includes: preventing debris from being conveyed to the valve element. In a preferred embodiment, the method further includes conveying fluidic materials from the inlet passage to a piston chamber. In a preferred embodiment, conveying fluidic materials from the inlet passage to the piston chamber includes: preventing debris from being conveyed to the valve element.

An apparatus has also been described that includes a first tubular member, a second tubular member positioned within and coupled to the first tubular member, a first annular chamber defined by the space between the first and second tubular members, an annular piston movably coupled to the second tubular member and positioned within the first annular chamber, an annular sleeve coupled to the annular piston and positioned within the first annular chamber, a third annular member coupled to the second annular member and positioned within and movably coupled to the annular sleeve, a second annular chamber defined by the space between the annular piston, the third annular member, the

second tubular member, and the annular sleeve, an inlet passage fluidically coupled to the first annular chamber, and an outlet passage fluidically coupled to the second annular chamber. In a preferred embodiment, the apparatus further includes: an annular expansion cone movably coupled to the second tubular member and positioned within the first annular chamber. In a preferred embodiment, the first tubular member includes: one or more sealing members coupled to an exterior surface of the first tubular member. In a preferred embodiment, the first tubular member includes: one or more ring members coupled to an exterior surface of the first tubular member.

A method of applying an axial force to a first piston positioned within a first piston chamber has also been described that includes applying an axial force to the first piston using a second piston positioned within the first piston chamber. In a preferred embodiment, the method further includes applying an axial force to the first piston by pressurizing the first piston chamber. In a preferred embodiment, the first piston chamber is a substantially annular chamber. In a preferred embodiment, the method further includes coupling an annular sleeve to the second piston, and applying the axial force to the first piston using the annular sleeve. In a preferred embodiment, the method further includes pressurizing the first piston chamber. In a preferred embodiment, the method further includes coupling the second piston to a second chamber, and depressurizing the second chamber.

An apparatus for radially expanding a tubular member has also been described that includes a support member, a tubular member coupled to the support member, a mandrel movably coupled to the support member and positioned within the tubular member, an annular expansion cone coupled to the mandrel and movably coupled to the tubular member for radially expanding the tubular member, and a lubrication assembly coupled to the mandrel for supplying a lubricant to the annular expansion cone, including: a sealing member coupled to the annular member, a body of lubricant positioned in an annular chamber defined by the space between the sealing member, the annular member, and the tubular member, and a lubrication supply passage fluidically coupled to the body of lubricant and the annular expansion cone for supplying a lubricant to the annular expansion cone. In a preferred embodiment, the tubular member includes: one or more sealing members positioned on an outer surface of the tubular member. In a preferred embodiment, the tubular member includes: one or more ring member positioned on an outer surface of the tubular member. In a preferred embodiment, the apparatus further includes: a centralizer coupled to the mandrel for centrally positioning the expansion cone within the tubular member. In a preferred embodiment, the apparatus further includes: a preload spring assembly for applying an axial force to the mandrel. In a preferred embodiment, the preload spring assembly includes: a compressed spring, and an annular spacer for compressing the compressed spring.

A method of operating an apparatus for radially expanding a tubular member including an expansion cone has also been described that includes lubricating the interface between the expansion cone and the tubular member, centrally positioning the expansion cone within the tubular member, and applying a substantially constant axial force to the tubular member prior to the beginning of the radial expansion process.

An apparatus has also been described that includes a support member, a tubular member coupled to the support member, an annular expansion cone movably coupled to the

support member and the tubular member and positioned within the tubular member for radially expanding the tubular member, and a preload assembly for applying an axial force to the annular expansion cone, including: a compressed spring coupled to the support member for applying the axial force to the annular expansion cone, and a spacer coupled to the support member for controlling the amount of spring compression.

An apparatus for coupling a tubular member to a pre-existing structure has also been described that includes a support member, a manifold coupled to the support member for controlling the flow of fluidic materials within the apparatus, a radial expansion assembly movably coupled to the support member for radially expanding the tubular member, and a coupling assembly for removably coupling the tubular member to the support member. In a preferred embodiment, the apparatus further includes a force multiplier assembly movably coupled to the support member for applying an axial force to the radial expansion assembly. In a preferred embodiment, the manifold includes: a throat passage adapted to receive a ball, and a valve for controlling the flow of fluidic materials out of the apparatus. In a preferred embodiment, the manifold further includes: a debris shield for preventing the entry of debris into the apparatus. In a preferred embodiment, the radial expansion assembly includes: a mandrel movably coupled to the support member, and an annular expansion cone coupled to the mandrel. In a preferred embodiment, the radial expansion assembly further includes: a lubrication assembly coupled to the mandrel for providing a lubricant to the interface between the expansion cone and the tubular member. In a preferred embodiment, the radial expansion assembly further includes: a preloaded spring assembly for applying an axial force to the mandrel. In a preferred embodiment, the tubular member includes one or more coupling slots, the support member includes one or more coupling slots, and the coupling assembly includes: a coupling body movably coupled to the support member, and one or more coupling elements coupled to the coupling body for engaging the coupling slots of the tubular member and the support member.

An apparatus for coupling a tubular member to a pre-existing structure has also been described that includes an annular support member including a first passage, a manifold coupled to the annular support member, including: a throat passage fluidically coupled to the first passage adapted to receive a fluid plug, a second passage fluidically coupled to the throat passage, a third passage fluidically coupled to the first passage, a fourth passage fluidically coupled to the third passage, one or more valve chambers fluidically coupled to the fourth passage including corresponding movable valve elements, one or more fifth passages fluidically coupled to the second passage and controllably coupled to corresponding valve chambers by corresponding movable valve elements, one or more sixth passages fluidically coupled to a region outside of the manifold and to corresponding valve chambers, one or more seventh passages fluidically coupled to corresponding valve chambers and the second passage, and one or more force multiplier supply passages fluidically coupled to the fourth passage, a force multiplier assembly coupled to the annular support member, including: a force multiplier tubular member coupled to the manifold, an annular force multiplier piston chamber defined by the space between the annular support member and the force multiplier tubular member and fluidically coupled to the force multiplier supply passages, an annular force multiplier piston positioned in the annular force multiplier piston chamber

and movably coupled to the annular support member, a force multiplier sleeve coupled to the annular force multiplier piston, a force multiplier sleeve sealing member coupled to the annular support member and movably coupled to the force multiplier sleeve for sealing the interface between the force multiplier sleeve and the annular support member, an annular force multiplier exhaust chamber defined by the space between the annular force multiplier piston, the force multiplier sleeve, and the force multiplier sleeve sealing member, and a force multiplier exhaust passage fluidically coupled to the annular force multiplier exhaust chamber and the interior of the annular support member, an expandable tubular member, a radial expansion assembly movably coupled to the annular support member, including: an annular mandrel positioned within the annular force multiplier piston chamber, an annular expansion cone coupled to the annular mandrel and movably coupled to the expandable tubular member, a lubrication assembly coupled to the annular mandrel for supplying lubrication to the interface between the annular expansion cone and the expandable tubular member, a centralizer coupled to the annular mandrel for centering the annular expansion cone within the expandable tubular member, and a preload assembly movably coupled to the annular support member for applying an axial force to the annular mandrel, and a coupling assembly coupled to the annular support member and releasably coupled to the expandable tubular member, including: a tubular coupling member coupled to the expandable tubular member including one or more tubular coupling member slots, an annular support member coupling interface coupled to the annular support member including one or more annular support member coupling interface slots, and a coupling device for releasably coupling the tubular coupling member to the annular support member coupling interface, including: a coupling device body movably coupled to the annular support member, one or more resilient coupling device arms extending from the coupling device body, and one or more coupling device coupling elements extending from corresponding coupling device arms adapted to removably mate with corresponding tubular coupling member and annular support member coupling slots.

A method of coupling a tubular member to a pre-existing structure has also been described that includes positioning an expansion cone and the tubular member within the preexisting structure using a support member, displacing the expansion cone relative to the tubular member in the axial direction, and decoupling the support member from the tubular member. In a preferred embodiment, displacing the expansion cone includes: displacing a force multiplier piston, and applying an axial force to the expansion cone using the force multiplier piston. In a preferred embodiment, displacing the expansion cone includes: applying fluid pressure to the expansion cone. In a preferred embodiment, displacing the force multiplier piston includes: applying fluid pressure to the force multiplier piston. In a preferred embodiment, the method further includes applying fluid pressure to the expansion cone. In a preferred embodiment, the decoupling includes: displacing the support member relative to the tubular member in a first direction, and displacing the support member relative to the tubular member in a second direction. In a preferred embodiment, decoupling includes: rotating the support member relative to the tubular member, and displacing the support member relative to the tubular member in an axial direction. In a preferred embodiment, the method further includes prior to displacing the expansion cone, injecting a hardenable fluidic material into the preexisting structure. In a preferred

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embodiment, the method further includes prior to decoupling, curing the hardenable fluidic sealing material.

An apparatus has also been described that includes a preexisting structure, and a radially expanded tubular member coupled to the preexisting structure by the process of: positioning an expansion cone and the tubular member within the preexisting structure using a support member, displacing the expansion cone relative to the tubular member in the axial direction, and decoupling the support member from the tubular member. In a preferred embodiment, displacing the expansion cone includes: displacing a force multiplier piston, and applying an axial force to the expansion cone using the force multiplier piston. In a preferred embodiment, displacing the expansion cone includes: applying fluid pressure to the expansion cone. In a preferred embodiment, displacing the force multiplier piston includes: applying fluid pressure to the force multiplier piston. In a preferred embodiment, the method further includes applying fluid pressure to the expansion cone. In a preferred embodiment, the decoupling includes: displacing the support member relative to the tubular member in a first direction, and displacing the support member relative to the tubular member in a second direction. In a preferred embodiment, decoupling includes: rotating the support member relative to the tubular member, and displacing the support member relative to the tubular member in an axial direction. In a preferred embodiment, the method further includes prior to displacing the expansion cone, injecting a hardenable fluidic material into the preexisting structure. In a preferred embodiment, the method further includes prior to decoupling, curing the hardenable fluidic sealing material.

Although illustrative embodiments of the invention have been shown and described, a wide range of modification, changes and substitution is contemplated in the foregoing disclosure. In some instances, some features of the present invention may be employed without a corresponding use of the other features. Accordingly, it is appropriate that the appended claims be construed broadly and in a manner consistent with the scope of the invention.

What is claimed is:

1. An apparatus for coupling two elements, comprising: an outer tubular member defining one or more outer tubular member slots; an inner tubular member defining one or more inner tubular member slots positioned within the outer tubular member; and a coupling assembly for releasably coupling the outer tubular member to the inner tubular member, comprising: a tubular coupling body movably coupled to the inner tubular member; a coupling arm extending from the tubular coupling body; and a coupling element extending from the coupling arm, said coupling element adapted to mate with at least one outer tubular member slot and at least one inner tubular member slot.
2. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the coupling arm extends from the tubular coupling body in a longitudinal direction.
3. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the coupling element extends from the coupling arm in a radial direction.
4. The apparatus of claim 1, further comprising: a tubular support member defining an internal passage having a throat passage, a plurality of radial passages coupled to the internal passage, and an external shoulder that is coupled to the inner tubular member.

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5. The apparatus of claim 4, wherein the tubular coupling body is movably coupled to the tubular support member.

6. The apparatus of claim 4, further comprising: a locking member coupled to the coupling assembly that comprises: a tubular locking body movably coupled to the tubular support member; and a plurality of locking dogs movably coupled to the tubular locking body for engaging the shoulder of the tubular support member.

7. The apparatus of claim 1, further comprising a plurality of coupling arms extending from the tubular coupling body.

8. An apparatus for coupling two elements, comprising:

an outer tubular member defining one or more outer tubular member slots;

an inner tubular member defining one or more inner tubular member slots positioned within the outer tubular member;

a coupling assembly for releasably coupling the outer tubular member to the inner tubular member, comprising:

a tubular coupling body movably coupled to the inner tubular member;

one or more coupling arms extending from the tubular coupling body; and

coupling elements extending from corresponding coupling arms adapted to mate with corresponding outer tubular member and inner tubular member slots;

a tubular support member defining an internal passage having a throat passage, a plurality of radial passages coupled to the internal passage, and an external shoulder that is coupled to the inner tubular member; and

a tubular retaining sleeve releasably coupled to the tubular support member for retaining the coupling elements within the corresponding pairs of outer tubular member and inner tubular member slots.

9. The apparatus of claim 8, further comprising: an annular pressure chamber defined between the tubular support member and the tubular retaining sleeve that is fluidically coupled to the radial passages of the tubular support member.

10. An apparatus, comprising:

an outer tubular member comprising a plurality of slots at a plurality of discrete circumferentially spaced apart locations;

an inner tubular member positioned within the outer tubular member, the inner tubular member comprising a plurality of slots at a plurality of discrete circumferentially spaced apart locations; and

a resilient coupling assembly for releasably coupling the outer tubular member slots to the inner tubular member slots at a plurality of discrete circumferentially spaced apart locations.

11. The apparatus of claim 10, further comprising:

a decoupling assembly for controllably decoupling the outer tubular member from the inner tubular member if the operating pressure within the inner tubular member exceeds a predetermined value.

12. The apparatus of claim 10, further comprising:

a decoupling assembly for controllably decoupling the outer tubular member from the inner tubular member if the inner tubular member is displaced in a longitudinal direction relative to the outer tubular member and then displaced in an opposite longitudinal direction relative to the outer tubular member.

13. An apparatus, comprising:

an outer tubular member comprising a plurality of slots at a plurality of discrete circumferentially spaced apart locations;

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an inner tubular member positioned within the outer tubular member, the inner tubular member comprising a plurality of slots at a plurality of discrete circumferentially spaced apart locations; and

means for releasably coupling at least one outer tubular member slot to at least one inner tubular member slot. 5

14. The apparatus of claim **13**, wherein the means for releasably coupling the outer tubular member slot to the inner tubular member slot comprises:

means for releasably coupling the outer tubular member to the inner tubular member at a plurality of circumferentially spaced apart slots. 10

15. The apparatus of claim **13**, further comprising:

means for decoupling the inner tubular member from the outer tubular member. 15

16. The apparatus of claim **15**, wherein the means for decoupling the inner tubular member from the outer tubular member comprises:

means for decoupling the inner tubular member from the outer tubular member if the operating pressure within the inner tubular member exceeds a predetermined value. 20

17. The apparatus of claim **15**, wherein the means for decoupling the inner tubular member from the outer tubular member comprises: 25

means for decoupling the inner tubular member from the outer tubular member if the inner tubular member is displaced relative to the outer tubular member in a longitudinal direction and then displaced relative to the outer tubular member in an opposite longitudinal direction. 30

18. An apparatus, comprising:

an outer tubular member defining a plurality of radial slots; 35

an inner tubular member defining a plurality of radial slots positioned within the outer tubular member;

a tubular support member defining an internal passage having a throat passage, a plurality of radial passages coupled to the internal passage, and an external shoulder that is coupled to the inner tubular member; 40

a coupling assembly for coupling the outer tubular member to the inner tubular member, including:

a tubular coupling body movably coupled to the tubular support member; a plurality of coupling arms extending from the tubular coupling body in a longitudinal direction; and 45

coupling elements extending from corresponding coupling arms in a radial direction that mate with corresponding pairs of outer tubular member and inner tubular member slots; 50

a locking member coupled to the coupling assembly that comprises:

a tubular locking body movably coupled to the tubular support member; and 55

a plurality of locking dogs movably coupled to the tubular locking body for engaging the shoulder of the tubular support member;

a tubular retaining sleeve releasably coupled to the tubular support member for retaining the coupling elements within the corresponding pairs of outer tubular member and inner tubular member slots; and 60

an annular pressure chamber defined between the tubular support member and the tubular retaining sleeve that is fluidically coupled to the radial passages of the tubular support member. 65

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19. An apparatus, comprising:

an outer tubular member comprising a plurality of slots at a plurality of discrete circumferentially spaced apart locations;

an inner tubular member positioned within the outer tubular member, the inner tubular member comprising a plurality of slots at a plurality of discrete circumferentially spaced apart locations;

a coupling assembly for releasably coupling the outer tubular member to the inner tubular member at a plurality of the discrete circumferentially spaced apart slots;

a first decoupling assembly for controllably decoupling the outer tubular member from the inner tubular member if the operating pressure within the inner tubular member exceeds a predetermined value; and

a second decoupling assembly for controllably decoupling the outer tubular member from the inner tubular member if the inner tubular member is displaced in a longitudinal direction relative to the outer tubular member and then displaced in an opposite longitudinal direction relative to the outer tubular member.

20. An apparatus, comprising:

an outer tubular member comprising a plurality of slots at a plurality of discrete circumferentially spaced apart locations;

an inner tubular member positioned within the outer tubular member, the inner tubular member comprising a plurality of slots at a plurality of discrete circumferentially spaced apart locations;

means for releasably coupling the outer tubular member to the inner tubular member at a plurality of the circumferentially spaced apart slots;

means for decoupling the inner tubular member from the outer tubular member if the operating pressure within the inner tubular member exceeds a predetermined value; and

means for decoupling the inner tubular member from the outer tubular member if the inner tubular member is displaced relative to the outer tubular member in a longitudinal direction and then displaced relative to the outer tubular member in an opposite longitudinal direction. 60

21. The apparatus of claim **7**, further comprising a plurality of coupling elements extending from the plurality of coupling arms.

22. The apparatus of claim **21**, wherein the plurality of coupling elements are adapted to mate with a plurality of outer tubular member slots and a plurality of inner tubular member slots.

23. The apparatus of claim **21**, wherein the plurality of coupling elements are mated with a plurality of outer tubular member slots and a plurality of inner tubular member slots.

24. An apparatus, comprising:

an outer tubular member comprising a plurality of slots at a plurality of discrete circumferentially spaced apart locations;

an inner tubular member positioned within the outer tubular member, the inner tubular member comprising a plurality of slots at a plurality of discrete circumferentially spaced apart locations; and

a non-frangible coupling assembly for releasably coupling the outer tubular member slots to the inner tubular member slots at a plurality of discrete circumferentially spaced apart locations.

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25. An apparatus, comprising:
 an outer tubular member comprising a plurality of slots at
 a plurality of discrete circumferentially spaced apart
 locations;
 an inner tubular member positioned within the outer
 tubular member, the inner tubular member comprising
 a plurality of slots at a plurality of discrete circumfer-
 entially spaced apart locations; and
 a radially moveable coupling assembly for releasably
 coupling the outer tubular member slots to the inner
 tubular member slots at a plurality of discrete circum-
 ferentially spaced apart locations.
26. An apparatus, comprising:
 an outer tubular member comprising a plurality of slots at
 a plurality of discrete circumferentially spaced apart
 locations;
 an inner tubular member positioned within the outer
 tubular member, the inner tubular member comprising
 a plurality of slots at a plurality of discrete circumfer-
 entially spaced apart locations; and
 a coupling assembly for releasably coupling the outer
 tubular member slots to the inner tubular member slots
 at a plurality of discrete circumferentially spaced apart
 locations, comprising:
 a base member; and
 one or more engagement members pivotally coupled to
 the base member for engaging corresponding slots of
 the inner and outer tubular members.
27. An apparatus, comprising:
 an outer tubular member comprising a plurality of slots at
 a plurality of discrete circumferentially spaced apart
 locations;
 an inner tubular member positioned within the outer
 tubular member, the inner tubular member comprising
 a plurality of slots at a plurality of discrete circumfer-
 entially spaced apart locations; and
 a coupling assembly for releasably coupling the outer
 tubular member slots to the inner tubular member slots
 at a plurality of discrete circumferentially spaced apart
 locations;
 wherein the coupling assembly is adapted to transmit
 torque loads between the inner and outer tubular mem-
 bers.
28. An apparatus, comprising:
 an outer tubular member comprising a plurality of slots at
 a plurality of discrete circumferentially spaced apart
 locations;
 an inner tubular member positioned within the outer
 tubular member, the inner tubular member comprising
 a plurality of slots at a plurality of discrete circumfer-
 entially spaced apart locations; and
 a coupling assembly for releasably coupling the outer
 tubular member slots to the inner tubular member slots
 at a plurality of discrete circumferentially spaced apart
 locations;
 wherein the coupling assembly is adapted to transmit
 axial loads between the inner and outer tubular mem-
 bers.
29. An apparatus, comprising:
 an outer tubular member comprising a plurality of slots at
 a plurality of discrete circumferentially spaced apart
 locations;
 an inner tubular member positioned within the outer
 tubular member, the inner tubular member comprising
 a plurality of slots at a plurality of discrete circumfer-
 entially spaced apart locations;
 a coupling assembly for releasably coupling the outer
 tubular member slots to the inner tubular member slots

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- at a plurality of discrete circumferentially spaced apart
 locations; and
 means for transmitting torque loads between the inner and
 outer tubular members.
30. An apparatus, comprising:
 an outer tubular member comprising a plurality of slots at
 a plurality of discrete circumferentially spaced apart
 locations;
 an inner tubular member positioned within the outer
 tubular member, the inner tubular member comprising
 a plurality of slots at a plurality of discrete circumfer-
 entially spaced apart locations;
 a coupling assembly for releasably coupling the outer
 tubular member slots to the inner tubular member slots
 at a plurality of discrete circumferentially spaced apart
 locations; and
 means for transmitting axial loads between the inner and
 outer tubular members.
31. An apparatus, comprising:
 an outer tubular member comprising a plurality of slots at
 a plurality of discrete circumferentially spaced apart
 locations;
 an inner tubular member positioned within the outer
 tubular member, the inner tubular member comprising
 a plurality of slots at a plurality of discrete circumfer-
 entially spaced apart locations;
 a coupling assembly for releasably coupling the outer
 tubular member slots to the inner tubular member slots
 at a plurality of discrete circumferentially spaced apart
 locations; and
 means for axially displacing the coupling assembly rela-
 tive to at least one of the inner and outer tubular
 members during a decoupling of the inner and outer
 tubular members.
32. An apparatus, comprising:
 an outer tubular member comprising a plurality of slots at
 a plurality of discrete circumferentially spaced apart
 locations;
 an inner tubular member positioned within the outer
 tubular member, the inner tubular member comprising
 a plurality of slots at a plurality of discrete circumfer-
 entially spaced apart locations;
 a coupling assembly for releasably coupling the outer
 tubular member slots to the inner tubular member slots
 at a plurality of discrete circumferentially spaced apart
 locations; and
 means for radially displacing the coupling assembly rela-
 tive to at least one of the inner and outer tubular
 members during a decoupling of the inner and outer
 tubular members.
33. An apparatus, comprising:
 an outer tubular member;
 an inner tubular member positioned within the outer
 tubular member releasably coupled to the outer tubular
 member;
 means for releasing the inner tubular member from
 engagement with the outer tubular member; and
 means for pressurizing the outer tubular member follow-
 ing the disengagement of the inner tubular member
 from the outer tubular member.